

# COMPONENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

A case study consisting line managers from Finnish industrial company

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Master's thesis  
October 2014

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(Adult Education)

ANTTILA, ELINA: Components of organizational commitment – A case study consisting managers from Finnish industrial company

Master's thesis, 82 p., 1 appendix

October 2014

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The aim of this study was to find factors affecting employees' organizational commitment within the case organization as well as point out some strengths and weaknesses the company has in this area. The company studied is Finnish multinational industrial company. The sample of this qualitative study consisted of nine Finnish first-level managers from different segments of this company.

The data was collected using theme interviews and qualitative attitude approach. Therefore, the analysis was also conducted in two separate ways. The data from theme interviews was analyzed using thematic content analysis while the analysis of the data from qualitative attitude approach followed the principles of that method concentrating on explanations of stance taking.

As a result of this study, the factors affecting the organizational commitment in this organization can be divided into three categories. The first one consist matters directly linked to the company itself. The second category has factors linked to the work community. Finally, the third is formed by factors related to the work characteristics. Company's strengths lie in its' interesting field of business and variety opportunities it can offer for employees globally. To improve organizational commitment it should pay attention to its' human resource practices.

From the findings it can be stated that employees' organizational commitment is a complex matter. Even though the company has important role in it, the factors regarding the organization are not only ones affecting this. It was strongly indicated that the work community and the characteristics of one's work has major impact on one's organizational commitment. However, organization and the culture create the premises for these to be good.

Key words: Organizational commitment, qualitative attitude approach, human resource

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## APPENDIX 1

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Why some people like to stay within one organization for their whole life? What binds an individual to the organization? What factors can be found common to those employees, who feel they would not like to change the organization? All of these questions are focused when examining organizational commitment.

Every person working in any work-related organization is automatically part of some bigger group. Employee is a member of a collective and this invisible tie between an employee and a collective is being studied when we are interested in organizational commitment. Every person varies how strongly he or she is attached to an organization and there can be numerous reasons behind this attachment, for example, affection, rational choice or habit. (Jokivuori 2002, 9.)

The aim of this study is to research employees' organizational commitment within the case organization. A big part of commitment is how employees see the company and the differences what sets it apart from all the other possible employers. Having committed employees is crucial for a successful company. If the company uses a lot of resources to find the correct persons for the job, it is extremely important to be able to keep them in the long run. Commitment comes into play in this process. On the other hand, it is important to study commitment and know the factors affecting it because it has potential to influence organizational effectiveness and employees' well-being (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 299).

There are various matters in today's world that shape the organizational commitment and make it interesting focus of the study. Like Meyer and Parfyonova (2010) note there is interesting paradox in the modern workforce. Now it is even more important than before for the organizations to have committed workforce to gain competitive advantage but still they conduct many process, like downsizing and mergers, which have the possibility to decrease commitment. (Meyer & Parfyonova 2010, 283.) Besides this paradox there are other aspects as well.

Firstly, it is said that these days it is much more common that people change jobs and companies during their career than it has been before. It is not certain that employees will stay within one company once hired for the whole work life. Now companies

should pay more attention to retain the talents. When employee feels committed to the organization, he or she will not change the company easily.

Secondly, it has been in the media that it is more challenging to get younger employees committed to the organization (see Laurinolli 2010). These employees are more and more committed to their job or career rather than the organization. This will be a challenge also for the companies' HR departments in the more competitive employment market. How to keep the young professionals in the company?

Lastly, the ongoing economic situation is also giving its' own perspective for studying commitment now. It has been found that during economical crisis, when the work environment is very insecure, employees become less committed to organizations (see Markovits, Boer & van Dick 2013). This brings up yet another challenge for HR departments. What matters can be found from the employees' point of view that separates one particular company from others? What are the matters that could be promoted?

In this research I will study managers of one Finnish multinational industrial company. The company will stay anonymous during this study, because of confidentiality issues. Even though company's head office is in Finland, it has operations globally in all the continents. The aim of this study is to shed light to this company's employees' organizational commitment rather than explain the situation as a whole.

During the theme interviews and qualitative attitude approach I had concentrated on a sample of company's Finnish managers trying to find factors, as well as individual explanations for the factors, affecting their organizational commitment. In addition, one aim was to try to find out possible strengths and weaknesses of this organization in relation to organizational commitment.

Therefore, the research questions are:

1. What matters are linked to manager's organizational commitment?
2. How do managers explain factors affecting commitment?
3. What matters are considered strengths in this organization?
4. What matters are considered needing improvement in this organization?

## **2 COMMITMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS**

### **2.1 Defining commitment**

Commitment is a very multidimensional concept and therefore somewhat hard to define. Commitment has been studied much, and it still “remains one of the most challenging and researched in the fields of management, organizational behavior and HRM [human resource management]” (Cohen 2007, 336). There has been numerous ways to define commitment in the past years and researchers from different fields like to emphasize different aspects of it (Jokivuori 2001, 17). Often commitment is seen as a force that binds individual to a course of action that is relevant to one or more targets (Cohen 2003, ix). Those targets can be directed to people, for example family or friends as well as to various institutions, like sports, community groups or work organization (Heery & Noon 2001, 91).

Commitment in the workplace can further be divided into different aspects. Employee may be committed to career, occupation, goals, teams, leaders or organization as such (see Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 300; Fleishmann & Cleveland 2003, ix). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, 299) conducted a review of the previous studies and conceptualizations on workplace commitment. They argue that it is well recognized that employees develop more than one work-relevant commitment. Even though all of these are to be seen in the workplace and affect employees total workplace commitment, they all have their own characteristics. In this paper the focus will be in organizational commitment.

What is good to notice, is that these various commitments will exist at the same time and employees always have many commitments to different institutions and people, for example, family, friends, sports and community groups. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect total commitment to the organization. (Heery & Noon 2001, 91.)

## **2.2 Comparison with similar concepts**

Not only in spoken language but also in some definitions used in business, the concepts of commitment and engagement are sometimes used to refer same matter. It has been argued that if engagement and organizational commitment are considered as equivalent to each other, “the very notion of engagement is superfluous”. (Schaufeli & Bakker 2010, 14.) The matter that clearly separates these two concepts is the fact that engagement also has a side of how you do your work. Engagement is not only characterized by identification to one’s work but also by high level of vigor (Bakker & Leiter 2010, 2). Engagement can be further divided into two categories, work engagement and employee engagement. Work engagement means the relationship the employee has with his or her work, while the term employee engagement sometime also includes the relationship with the organization. In this case the concept comes very close to organizational commitment, and thus can be mixed. (Schaufeli & Bakker 2010, 10.)

However, work engagement is conceptually different from organizational commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker 2010, 15). It is a motivational concept, where employees feel tempted to strive towards a challenging goal. Also, it shows the personal energy that employees bring to their work. (Bakker & Leiter 2010, 2.) In other words, employees want to succeed and they do everything involved with it with high energy. To summarize, “work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related well-being that can be seen as the antipode of job burnout” (Bakker & Leiter 2010, 1–2). Work engagement has three components – vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor means the high energy that the employee uses to conduct his or her daily work. Employee is willing to invest effort to one’s work and is persistent, even in cases when the work is challenging. Dedication refers to the strong involvement and results positive feelings like inspiration, significance, pride and enthusiasm. Lastly, absorption means that employee becomes fully concentrated and immersed in one’s work in a way that it feels like time passes very fast and it is difficult for him or her to detach from the work. (Halbesleben & Wheeler 2008, 243; Schaufeli & Salanova 2007, 141.) Absorption has also been described as having a feeling of “flow”, that is quite stable and long lasting (Hallberg & Schaufeli 2006, 120).

What is common to work engagement and organizational commitment is that they both refer to positive attachment to work. Both conceptualizations include theoretical references to each other. (Hallberg & Schaufeli 2006, 120.) However, in their study Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) have proved that there is theoretical difference between these concepts. The latent intercorrelation between organizational commitment and work engagement was .46. This means that they are related but do not overlap, meaning they truly are different constructs. In addition, there were different patterns for correlations between health complaints and job factors within these concepts. As an illustration, work engagement was more negatively correlated with health complaints, while organizational commitment had higher negative correlation with turnover intention. (Hallberg & Schaufeli 2006, 123–124.) Therefore, even though in some discussions these terms are used interchangeably, there really are theoretical differences in these concepts.

In addition to engagement, social identity is yet another term very close to commitment. Different people have seen the relationship between identification, one type of social identity, and commitment very differently. According to Meyer, Becker and Van Dick (2006, 666) sometimes those two are seen as the same, sometimes commitment as being part of identification and in some cases identification is seen as antecedent of commitment. They argue the reason to be that there has not been an attempt trying to integrate. Common to all these conceptualizations is the fact that social identity involves aspect of person including the group membership as a part of one's self concept (Riketta 2005, 360–361).

Identification and commitment both refer to psychological relationship the individual has with the organization, but the difference is in the nature of the relationship. Commitment reflects a relationship between two separate entities while identification is seen as psychological oneness. When employee identifies oneself with the organization, organization's values, norms and interests are associated into employee's self-concept. Thus, collective interests become self-interests. (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos 2006, 571–572.) Van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) conducted a study to find out whether these two concepts are distinct. They found that there are divergent patterns of relationship observed for identification and commitment. Similar to the differentiation with engagement, these two concepts also overlap partially, but they uniquely show different aspects of the relationship between organization and employee.



In conclusion, there are many concepts used to define the connection between employee and the organization. Like introduced, some of the conceptualizations are relatively similar, but there are empirically proven differences as well. In this study, my focus will be on organizational commitment, because I am interested in finding out if there are factors that the organization can change in order to make their employees more committed. I am more interested on this topic from the company's perspective rather than solely on individual's perspective. Matters related to personal feeling of drive and vigor are something the company cannot affect that easily. From adult education's point of view I think it is important to get to know and understand factors affecting employees' organizational commitment and therefore have a possibility to find out ways to improve it.

## **2.3 Organizational commitment**

Like it is hard to comprehensively define commitment as such, the same difficulty is for organizational commitment. However, it has been possible to find common factors to various definitions. Common to all of these conceptualizations is a connection with turnover, "employees who are strongly committed are those who are least likely to leave the organization" (Allen & Meyer 1990, 1).

Commitment in the workplace has been quite widely studied since 1950's (Cohen 2003, ix). On the other hand, like Jokivuori (2001, 9) points out, there is quite rational reason behind that, since organizational commitment is connected to many things we consider important – work satisfaction, sickness related absences and willingness to change job, just to mention few. Despite the vast amount of studies and interest towards commitment, there is still disagreement about what it is, how it develops and affects behavior (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 299). Next I will introduce different models used to conceptualize organizational commitment. Later in this paper when talking about commitment, it will always refer to organizational commitment.

## **O'Reilly and Chatman's model**

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) see organizational commitment as a psychological attachment to an organization. According to Ruokolainen (2011, 15) it reflects “the degree to which employee internalizes or adopts the characteristics or perspectives of the organization”. Commitment can be formed by three independent mechanisms: compliance, identification and internalization. Compliance is shallowest of them all and is connected to rewards. Person adopts certain attitudes and behaviors in order to gain specific awards. Identification is step further into deeper commitment. Employee feels proud to be part of that specific organization and thus accepts and respects its' values and accomplishments. He or she wants to establish or maintain good relationship with that specific group. However, what separates that from the internalization is that he or she does not adapt those values as his or her own. Therefore, internalization occurs finally when there is value congruence between the person and the organization. Employee accepts organization's values because those are very similar to his or her own. (O'Reilly & Chatman 1986, 493.) The fact that this model was first one to make clear distinction between the instrumental exchange and psychological attachment as forms of commitment has been noted as benefit for this model. Instrumental refers to commitment based on rewarding, while psychological attachment is the deeper form. (Weibo, Kaur & Jun 2010, 14.)

However, there have been few matters that have received critique in this model. Internalization and identification correlate positively with intend to stay with an organization, while compliance acts in the opposite way actually correlating positively with turnover. This is further shown in the results implicating that the longer the tenure, the less likely it is that commitment is based on compliance. (O'Reilly & Chatman 1986, 495.) Since it is often thought that organizational commitment reduces the likelihood of turnover, there has been questioning whether compliance can be thought as a form of organizational commitment at all (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 306).

Another point that has received critique in this model is that internalization and identification come very close to each other as concepts, and even include some of the same elements (see Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 305–306). In the studies conducted later it has actually been proved that internalization and identification can be merged together forming one dimension. The measures correlate very highly with one another

and other variables show quite similar patterns of correlations with these two dimensions. (Caldwell, Chatman & O'Reilly 1990, 257.) For these reasons, this model never has been that largely used and Allen and Mayer's model became dominantly used in the studies of commitment (Weibo, Kaur & Jun 2010, 14.)

### **Three-component model of commitment**

One of the most widely used theories in organizational commitment is Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-component model (see Markovits, Boer & van Dick 2013; Garcia-Gabrera & Garcia-Soto 2012, 3151). It has been the leading approach in studying organizational commitment for more than 20 years (Cohen 2007, 337). Lately, it has been the most widely accepted conceptualization of organizational commitment (Herrbach 2006, 631). It sees commitment as having three separable forms: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Next I will introduce all three components and make differentiation between one another.

Affective commitment is employees' emotional attachment to organization, identification with organization and involvement in organization. Employees, who have strong affective commitment, stay in the organization because they want to. (Allen & Meyer 1990, 1–3.) Therefore, this form of commitment is based on desire. However, there has not been a uniform conclusion on what are the mechanisms involved creating it, but Meyer and Herscovitch (2001, 316) propose that any variable that will increase the probability of the following three matters will help individual to become affectively committed. First, an individual becomes involved, meaning motivated by his or her own will or absorbed in the flow, in a course of action. Second, an individual recognizes the value or relevance of the entity or the course of action to him or herself. Last, association with the entity or a course of action will shape an individual's identity. (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 316.) Out of the three forms, affective commitment has been studied the most (see Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky 2002; Bergman 2006).

Continuance commitment is commitment based on the costs that would occur if the person left the organization. Therefore, people having high continuance commitment stay in the organization because they need to. In other words, it would cost too much to

leave. This would be the case, for example, if employee has used a lot of time and resources to learn something that can only be used in that particular company or at the time there are no similar or better employment opportunities available than the current position. (Allen & Meyer 1990, 1–3; Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 316; Garcia-Gabrera & Garcia-Soto 2012, 3155–3156.)

Finally, normative commitment refers to person's feelings of obligation to stay with the organization. In other words, employees remain in the organization because they ought to do so. It is proposed that normative commitment is influenced by person's experiences both before and after entering the organization. This means that not only organizational socialization but also socialization that occurs in the families and society at large also affects how employee's normative commitment develops. (Allen & Meyer 1990, 1–4; Markovits, Boer & van Dick 2013.) Until today, this is the one that has been studied the least out of these three (Bergman 2006, 647).

Despite the popularity and support of the model, there is still quite large dispute whether normative commitment can be differentiated from affective commitment (see Bergman 2006). Even though there have been factor analyses, which result better fit when those are separated, the question arises from the fact that correlations between affective and normative commitment are found to be very high (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 305). In a large meta-analysis it was found that the correlation between these two was 0.63 (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky 2002, 28). Therefore, almost 40 % of the variance in one is explained by the other (Bergman 2006, 646).

Bergman (2006) reviewed theoretical and empirical literature to find out whether these two dimensions can truly be separated. She states that theoretically these two are different in describing the ways in which individual can bond with an organization. (Bergman 2006, 647–659.) However, there is not that strong empirical evidence for it. Meyer et al. (2002, 41) found out that there is much bigger correlation between these concepts in the studies conducted outside of North America than within. On one hand, this might reflect that there are cultural differences on how individuals see these concepts or on the other hand, there could have been difficulties in the translation process leaving the constructs unclear. The conclusion is that it still remains unclear if there should be both of these constructs (Bergman 2006, 647–659).

## Cohen's four component commitment model

Previously mentioned critique has led to development of newer models. Cohen's four component commitment model is one of these (Cohen 2007). Regardless of similarities in the name with previously introduced Allen and Meyer's model, this one sees commitment in a different way. One of the biggest differences is that this model includes timeframe. It makes distinction between organizational commitment that develops before entering the organization and commitment developed after the entry. The other two dimensions are bases of commitment, whether it is instrumental or psychological attachment. (Cohen 2007, 337.) When comparing these two, instrumental commitment is attachment based on more tangible exchange relationship, like rewards and salary while psychological attachment is perceptions of justice, perceptions of organizational support and transformational leadership (Cohen 2007, 343, 349). Figure 1 describes how these four dimensions are connected. Next I will introduce all of these dimensions briefly.

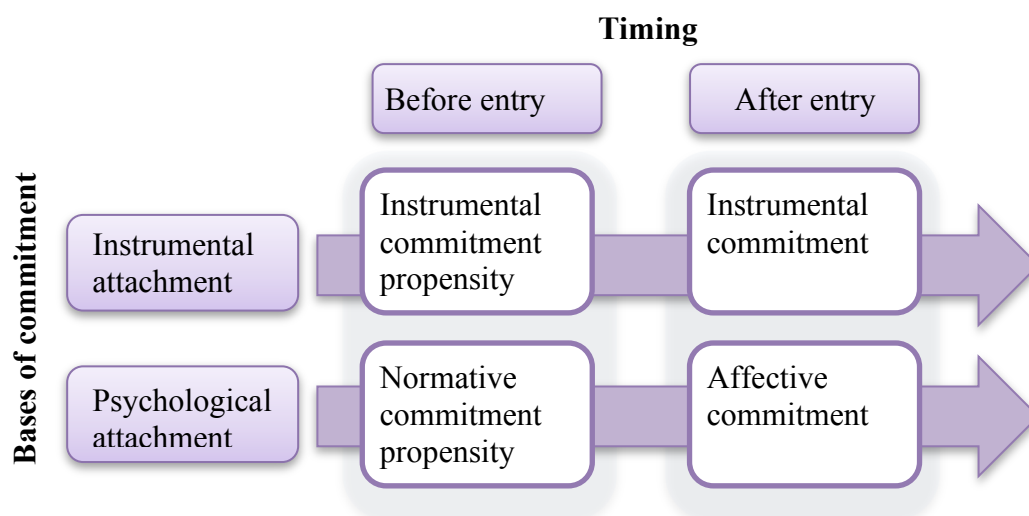


Figure 1. A four component model adapted from Cohen 2007

Therefore, before entering the organization, person develops the following types of commitment – *instrumental commitment propensity* and *normative commitment propensity*. Propensity can be thought as tendency. The first is derived from person's general expectations about the quality of the exchange with the organization about the

expected benefits and rewards person might receive from it in return of the contribution given. The second is defined by general moral obligations toward the organization. (Cohen 2007, 337.) Accordingly, after entering the organization employee develops *instrumental commitment* and *affective commitment*. Instrumental commitment is a reflection of the instrumental commitment propensity, and therefore person reflects how well one's expectations about the benefits and rewards are met. While affective commitment is a psychological attachment to the organization, which can be seen as identification with it, emotional involvement and a sense of belonging. (Cohen 2007, 337.) This is basically the very same as the one on Allen and Meyer's model.

Another difference between this and 'three-component model' (Allen & Meyer 1990) is the way in which focus is shifted from the costs associated with leaving the company, previously called continuance commitment, to benefits of staying, which is called instrumental commitment. (Cohen 2007, 336.) In other words, these two concepts are measuring the same matter but viewing it from the opposite sides. There are a couple of reasons to choose this type of point of view. First is to avoid any potential overlap with outcomes of commitment, such as turnover intentions. Second, continuance commitment has received criticism about the construct and predictive validity. (Cohen 2007, 343.)

Like mentioned before, there are remarkable correlations between normative and affective commitment in Allen and Meyer's model (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky 2002, 28). Cohen tackles this issue in this model with the time dimension. He argues that normative commitment is rather a propensity to be committed and therefore when studying it, the focus should be on the time before entering the organization, not after. (Cohen 2007, 338.) Like Allen and Meyer (1990, 14) themselves note that normative commitment is mostly affected by early socialization and cultural factors, Cohen argues that measuring it gives very little information about organizational commitment of current employees. For this reason, normative commitment gives information about individual differences regarding their propensity to become morally committed to the organization. (Cohen 2007, 343.)

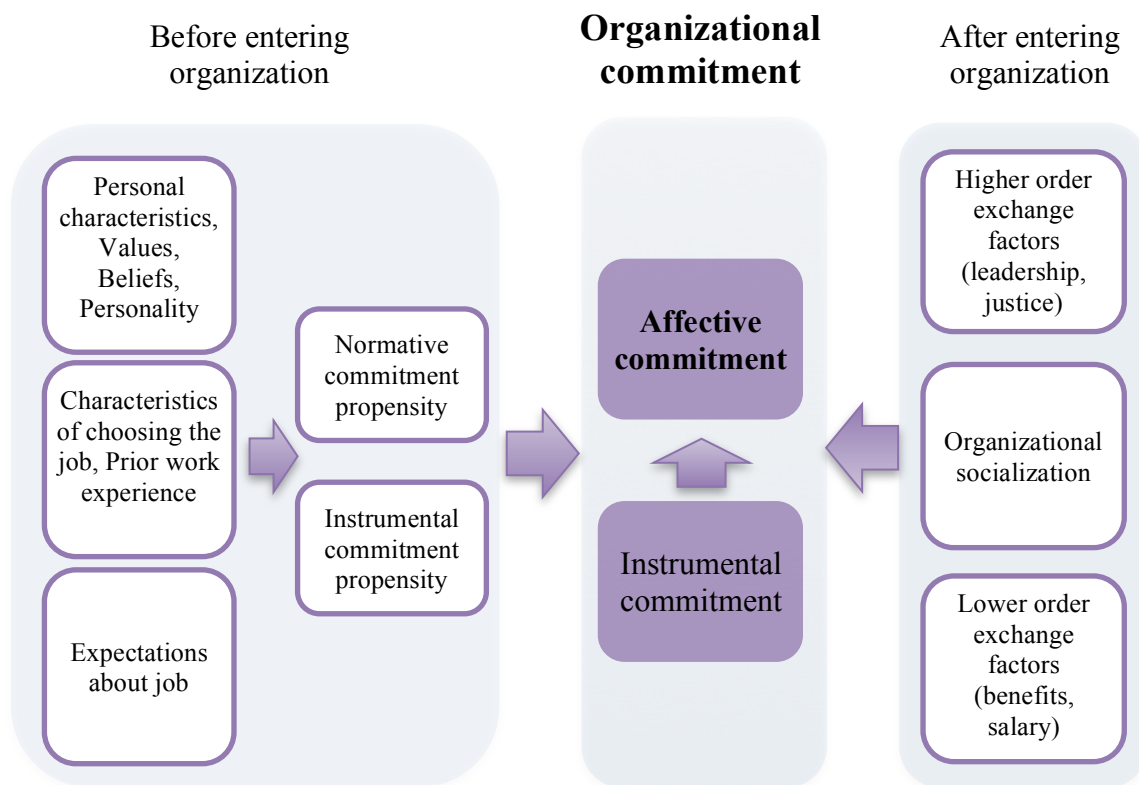


Figure 2. Modified from Cohen's (2007) model of the development of organizational commitment

Based on previous studies the model also makes propositions about what factors affect different parts of commitment and those can be seen above on Figure 2. Organizational socialization means how employees learn the values, beliefs, behaviors and skills needed to perform well in their new job and new organization (Van Maanen 1976 see Cohen 2007, 349). In other words, organizational socialization is the process of onboarding. Lower order exchange factors refer to lower order needs that will affect person's commitment. Like mentioned in the figure and already previously in this paper those are factors like salary and rewards. The idea behind the division between higher and lower order factors is partially based on Herzberg motivation theory (see for example Herzberg 1987). Main thought behind his theory of motivation is that first one has to satisfy the hygiene factors, which are extrinsic and only after those are good one can start to develop intrinsic motivation factors. Thus hygiene factors serve as a base and precondition that have to be met first. The same idea is for lower and higher order

exchange factors, but one can start to develop those simultaneously. (see Cohen 2007, 344.) Higher order exchange factors refer to transformational leadership, perceptions of justice and organizational support (Cohen 2007, 349).

Cohen argues that after entering the organization, instrumental commitment starts to develop faster than affective commitment, which will take more time and information to develop (Cohen 2007, 346). Instrumental commitment is seen as somewhat shallow commitment, because it is based on very tangible exchange. Therefore, companies who invest in this kind of exchange have to keep in mind that people might very easily change company if they get better offer regarding rewards from some other company. On the comparison, affective commitment is seen as the highest and deepest level of commitment and instrumental commitment also affects how this is formed. Higher order needs play a key role in heightening the levels of employee commitment. (Cohen 2007, 352.) This is why companies should pay more attention to those in the long run.

What should also be kept in mind is that person's previous work experiences and experiences from commitment will always affect the propensity when moving into new employment (Cohen 2007, 349). Therefore, the matters affecting person's propensity are somewhat impossible to affect.

## **2.4 Antecedents**

There are numerous different factors that have been shown to precede organizational commitment. Antecedents have been widely studied and Meyer et al. (2002, 28–32) came up with four antecedent categories after a wide meta-analysis. First, organizational commitment seems to be related to demographic variables, such as age, gender, education and length of service in one organization. Second, they found that work experiences, like organizational support, role conflict and role ambiguity, have an effect on organizational commitment. Third group is availability of alternatives and investments, including transferability of education and skills. Fourth, there are individual differences, like external locus of control and task self-efficacy. Next I will elaborate on some of the antecedents that have been seen important for organizational commitment.



## **Job control and job insecurity**

Perceived job control has two dimensions, job autonomy and participation in the decision-making process (Spector 1998, 164). Job autonomy means that employee can decide him or herself how the work gets done, what are his or her goals and utilize his or her skills at work (Ruokolainen 2011, 19). Therefore, employee has much freedom what comes to his or her own work. There is much evidence that a high level of job control increases employee's organizational commitment (see Ruokolainen 2011, 19). Also, organizational commitment, especially affective organizational commitment, is higher when employees are allowed to be part in the decision-making process (e.g. Wasti & Can 2008, 408).

Job insecurity refers to a threat of involuntary job loss or job continuity and as a result state of being unemployed (De Witte 1999, 156). The concept has had many definitions, but in his literature review De Witte (2005) has found the following matters common to most of them. First, it is a subjective perception of the situation, meaning that the very same situation might cause one employee to feel insecure about his or her job while someone else might feel secure when facing the same situation. The second common aspect is that it concerns insecurity of the future. In other words, employees are uncertain what will happen, will they be able to keep their job or not. Therefore, this makes distinction to the situation where employee has received a dismissal notice and can start preparing the concrete actions to manage with it. The last matter is that the job insecurity is involuntary, and thus this conceptualization leaves out employees who deliberately choose to have unsure job status by, for example, having temporary contracts. (De Witte 2005, 1.) In her research Ruokolainen (2005) found perceptions of job insecurity to be one of the most important factors affecting employees' weak organizational commitment (Ruokolainen 2005, 83).

## **Career advancement**

Findings from previous study show that overall employees are more committed if they are satisfied with how their needs for ongoing development are met. On the contrary to previous career-stage models' prediction, career advancement has an effect to both commitment and willingness to change company for employees of all ages. Before it

was thought to be much more important for employees between 31 and 45 years than for other age groups. (Finegold et al. 2002, 669.)

In addition, it has been seen that career management overall is very important factor for organizational commitment. If companies help their employees with that, they may become more committed to their organizations. This is because it helps them to understand the company values and support them. (Enache, Sallan, Simo & Fernandez 2013, 893.)

## **Age**

In many researches age has been seen important factor on organizational commitment, however its value as an explanatory factor has also been questioned (see Ruokolainen 2001; Finegold, Mohrman & Spreitzer 2002, 669). There is evidence that the older the employees are, the more organizationally committed they usually are (Ruokolainen 2011, 23). I will introduce three reasons why age is taken as an explanatory factor for organizational commitment and at the same time also shed some light why this still is somewhat contradictory issue.

First, age influences on what employees want from work and therefore how committed they are (Ruokolainen 2011, 23). Compared to older employees younger are more likely to stay within one company if they are satisfied with skill development. In addition, commitment is strongly related to good work-life balance with younger employees compared to older. On the other hand, older employees have higher commitment and they are less likely to change company if they see the job as secure one. (Finegold et al. 2002, 668.)

Second, the stage of employees career, which is often correlated with age, reflects their organizational commitment (Finegold, Mohrman & Spreitzer 2002, 657). It is more common that employees, who have been working for a long time and, therefore are on their middle and late stages, have jobs that include broad organizational roles and responsibilities as well as consulting and guidance. These roles in the organization then lead them to be more committed to that particular organization. (Ruokolainen 2011, 23.)

However, in today's world employees' age does not always correlate with their career stage. Because of flatter organization structures, reduced employment security and greater labor mobility, employees often do not stay within one company for their whole tenure. This has also been referred as protean career. (Finegold et al. 2002, 657.) Protean career is "a name given to describe a career that is driven by the individual and not by the organization" (Briscoe 2006, 650). The name indicates the diversity and changes that are often common in today's careers. Employees may change the organization they are working for as well as the entire field of working. This means that they will start the learning curve again, but not necessary from the very beginning since one can often exploit previously learned skills on the new job. (Finegold et al. 2002, 657.) Overall, this leads to the fact that employees of same age are going on different stages of their career and therefore age will not always correlate with one's career stage.

Third, it has also been suggested that birth cohort effect may explain the relationship between age and organizational commitment (Finegold et al. 2002, 658). Birth cohort means people who have been born about same time and therefore lived their lives so that they have been affected by economical, cultural and societal changes of the environment when they have been similar age. Unlike the career stages, cohort effect will not change during employees' career. It is something that the members of certain cohort will carry with them throughout their whole career. (Finegold et al. 2002, 658.) These birth cohorts have been shown to affect many matters but also how people see their professional identity and employment preferences (Ruokolainen 2011, 23.)

Finegold et al. (2002) conducted a large research to find whether age has an effect on some parts of employment, which predict commitment and willingness to change company. It included over 3000 technical professionals from six different companies. The main finding is that age has a statistically significant effect on employees' organizational commitment, however the size of the effect is small. Overall, it seems that there are larger similarities than differences among the age groups. Therefore, they state that it is somewhat overreacting, even though popular, for managers to pay much attention to age differences when it comes to organizational commitment. (Finegold et al. 2002, 655–670.)

## Culture

Besides the ones mentioned before, employees' culture is also one important factor affecting organizational commitment. The interest for culture differences in commitment has increased recently because of globalization and increased cultural diversity in the workplace (Meyer, Stanley, Jackson, McInnis, Maltin & Sheppard 2012, 225). This also brings up new challenges for companies' human resource department. Employees with different cultural backgrounds may see the same workplace very differently (Williamson et al. 2009, 29). Therefore, when implementing strategies targeting to increase employees' organizational commitment, employees shouldn't be seen as one homogenous group. In their research Williamson et al. (2009, 37) found that the level of employee's collectivism affects the way in which their organizational commitment can be affected by extrinsic or intrinsic rewards. Therefore, if the reward system is created and used wisely taking culture into consideration, it can be used to affect existing employees organizational commitment.

The way in which culture affects employees' organizational commitment has been studied, but most of the studies have only focused on two dimensions of culture: individualism versus collectivism and power distance. Individualism means that person's identity is based on personal qualities while in collectivism it is built on group membership. Power distance is explained by how person accepts the unequal power distribution between managers and subordinates. (Meyer et al. 2012, 226.) Even though these have been studied Meyer et al. (2002, 226) argue based on their large meta-analytical study that there is no consensus how these dimensions affect commitment.

In their research Meyer et al. (2002) studied the effect of culture concentrating to Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-component model of commitment. The meta-analysis consisted only researches that have used this theory. The sample size was very large, although there were different amount of studies found for each type of commitment. Like said, affective commitment has been studied the most, and naturally the sample size was biggest (966). Other samples were large too, 336 studies about normative commitment and 428 about continuance commitment. Therefore, conclusions based on this meta-analysis can be taken as very reliable.

The results of the meta-analysis indicate that affective commitment and normative commitment are higher in the countries with stronger collectivistic values (Meyer et al.

2002, 238). In other words, employees tend to stay within the organization both because they want to as well as because they feel obligation they should to more in the cultures where individuals base their identity to group values compared to cultures where identity is based on personal qualities. Normative commitment is also higher in the countries with stronger power distance values (Meyer et al. 2002, 238). That is employees feel they ought to stay within organization in the cultures where power distribution between managers and subordinates is unequal.

In conclusion, they found that cultural values explained the most the difference in normative commitment, the second most in affective commitment, but they did not explain the variance in continuance commitment (Meyer et al. 2002, 225). The research suggests that normative commitment might be strongest in the cultures “where group interests are put ahead of individual interests and there is a well established and accepted male-dominated power hierarchy intended to promote certainty and control in the long term” (Meyer et al. 2002, 242).

To summarize, organizations operating in a global environment have to keep in mind that the nature and the level of commitment may differ from culture to culture. Some of these differences, especially those that come to normative commitment, can be predicted based on the cultural values (Meyer et al. 2002, 242). This is an important for companies’ human resource management.

## **2.5 Challenges for organizational commitment**

Like mentioned briefly in the introduction, today’s world in general and furthermore the on-going economic situation brings various challenges for organizational commitment. During economical hardships it is even more critical for companies to have committed employees. It may only be one important factor saving the company during the crisis but also it has a crucial role in the long run for company to get better position in the market when the economic situation gets better. Company having committed employees has a clear competitive advantage in talent strategy and business results that is difficult to copy. (Shahid & Azhar 2013, 262.) However, to gain this kind of advantage at the times like now is definitely not easy. Economical hardships, global competition, quartile

economics and changes in technology and consumer preferences change the work less predictable. All of these conditions can furthermore force companies to downsize, outsource and reengineer jobs to stay efficient and alive (Meyer 2009, 37). Under these circumstances it is challenging for companies to show commitment to their employees. Consequently, this all leads to the fact, that it is not easy for employees to stay committed to their organizations. (Ruokolainen 2011, 11–12.)

These days when the economy faces crises and, therefore, many organizations are having hard time in this turbulent environment, it is interesting to see how it affects commitment. Cohen (2003, 4) reminds that in changing organizational environments it is crucial to ask if employees still identify with organizations, how they are attached and what factors affect it. In their recent paper Markovits, Boer and van Dick (2013) studied the effects of Greece's economical crisis to employees' work-related attitudes including commitment. They conducted longitudinal survey; the first sample was collected before the crisis in between 2004 and 2007 and the second one in the middle of the crisis during 2011-2012.

They found out that these conditions truly have an impact on employees' organizational commitment. Using Meyer and Allan's three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment they found out that the affective commitment was significantly lower in the second sample. This is expected since the affective feelings at work are negatively influenced during crisis. Somewhat against the expectations, there wasn't any significant change on continuance commitment. In other words, even though there are very limited employment opportunities because of the economical crisis, people still felt that personal costs of leaving the current position are similar to those before the recession.

Lastly, there was also a decrease on normative commitment. Markovits et al. (2013) argue that "this form of commitment is deeply rooted in and influenced by the socialization process, and the values and beliefs stemming from family, school and community environment" and therefore was quite surprising to see the change on this as quickly as just two years after the recession in Greece started. In conclusion, it can be seen that the external environment has profound impact on person's commitment.

On the other hand, it has been argued whether organizational commitment is any longer relevant concept at all. Enache, Sallan, Simo and Fernandez (2013, 881) point out that,

since companies can no longer promise life-time employment and individuals are more and more wanting to change work organizations during their career, for individuals it is more about career orientations these days rather than organizational commitment. Employees are seeking more emotionally satisfying lives by discovering the full potential of their career regardless of the organization boundaries.

Enache et al. (2013, 882) studied the effects of contemporary career context on commitment. Employees have taken more active role shaping their own careers and professional development seeking opportunities for continuous learning, future marketability and psychologically meaningful work. In this sense they “rather than their employing organizations become the architects of their own careers, development and vocational destiny” (Enache et al. 2013, 882). Since this concept is still very important for companies, it is a challenge for human resource organizations to try to find ways to tackle these challenges.

## **2.6 Benefits of organizational commitment**

When the employee is committed to an organization, there can be seen many positive outcomes for individual as well as for the organization itself. One benefit that it has for the employee is that it has potential to influence employee’s well-being (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 299). In addition, it has shown to increase employee’s job satisfaction (Vandenberg and Lance 1992 in Shahid & Azhar 2013, 253). Organization can benefit of committed employees in variety of ways. In a wide scale they have the potential to influence organization’s effectiveness (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001, 299). Employees are less likely to leave the organization reducing the turnover (Allen & Meyer 1990, 1). Equally important, Shahid and Azhar (2013, 253) state that committed employees can often make things work even without very good systems and are key for higher productivity in the organizations.

Organizational commitment should result in improved relationships and performance of the organization (Rylander 2003, 142). Especially affective organizational commitment has been shown to correlate positively with the measures of organizational performance (Wright, Gardner, Moynihan & Allen 2005, 431). In their study Wright et al. used six

measures of performance. Those were workers compensation, quality, shrinkage, productivity, operating expenses and profitability. There was strong correlation between all of these measures of organizational performance and affective organizational commitment. (Wright et al. 2005, 426–431.) However, there has to be more research conducted to be certain about the causality of these two. In other words, there are some doubts about which one is causing the other one to happen. (Mayer 2007, 47.)

After conducting meta-analysis of the studies conducted on organizational commitment Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found consequences of organizational commitment to be related to job performance and withdrawal behavior, such as intention to search for alternatives, intention to leave and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac 1990, 174). Therefore, not only employees will manage their work better but also they are less likely to leave the organization.



## **3 METHODS**

### **3.1 Research methods**

Even though this study is qualitative in nature, I have also used quantitative data as a secondary material to get background information. Often triangulation is justified by the fact that one research method would not describe the target of the research fully enough (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006). In this study triangulation has been used because the company already has a comprehensive global data from the employee engagement survey that has some parts relevant to this study. However, since it was not designed to study organizational commitment, it does not have enough information to study this comprehensively. With the qualitative interview data it is possible to examine more deeply the factors affecting the commitment and individual explanations managers give for different aspects.

The research method for the empirical part as a whole is a case study, where the case and the target to study are considered to be case company's employees' organizational commitment. As a method case study is excellent when trying to individually explore and understand how the chosen case works (see Metsämuuronen 2008, 210–212). Therefore, it is not seeking to “produce knowledge that could be generalized to other contexts in the conventional meaning” (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 121). The research questions are always formulated in a way that they aim to understand and solve the case. In other words, one wants to know the true nature of the case and the fact what can be learned when studying it (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 115).

In this case, the aim is only to examine this target organization and provide further and more profound knowledge how organizational commitment is seen in the company. Cases are always unique in some way, and researcher's duty is to show these unique features to the audience (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 121). Very often business-related case studies are practical and normative in nature. This means that the target of the study is a real-life situation and the aim is to know more about that particular phenomenon. In addition to that, with the results of the study one can often give suggestions how to be successful in that certain matter or how can you possibly avoid some mistakes. One important matter to bear in mind is that these suggestions are to

some extent case specific; therefore they apply at least to this target organization, maybe also specific business contexts. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 116.) Because of that, my goal is only to enlighten employees' organizational commitment by studying small sample of managers in this target organization, not to generalize the results to any other company.

### **3.2 Sample and data collection**

As background information for the interviews I used the data from company's last employee engagement survey. The ready available quantitative data covers basically the whole organization globally. Altogether the response rate was 75 %, meaning that the results can be said to describe the company as a whole. The survey focused on many dimensions, such as job, leadership, safety, strategy, well-being, working community atmosphere, performance and development. The survey included 53 questions with 5-point likert scale and two open questions.

The data was collected in the middle of the year 2012, and this is the most recent employee engagement survey conducted in the organization. There were altogether 20 language versions made available, and therefore it was possible for most of the employees to answer in their native language. It was optional for employees to answer the questionnaire, however there were a couple of reminders sent along the way. All this being said, I would say the results of this survey can be seen as reliable picture of the situation in the case organization during that time.

Since culture plays big role in commitment, people in the different parts of the world might not see the company in the same way and there might be different factors affecting their organizational commitment (see Garcia-Gabrera & Garcia-Soto 2012, 3153). Therefore, I have decided to concentrate only on one country in this study.

The focus of this study is on first-level managers in Finland. They are key players in what comes to being in the middle of employees and higher-level managers. They have to communicate the company's strategy and other big issues to the employees and bring it to concrete level making it truly happen. On the other hand, they are in good position to know what is happening on the ground level and, therefore, in a position to convey

the message of the employees to higher level. If these people are not committed to the organization, it must be hard for them to inspire and encourage their team to be committed and work toward the common goals. Choosing managers to be studied shows one aspect of employees' commitment in this company. I did not want to overemphasize the role of the manager in the results and therefore I often use term employees' commitment rather than manager's commitment.

There was also purely logistical and practical reason for choosing manager-level employees. All of them should have a computer or at least an access to one, which makes it easier to reach them. I was worried if I am able to convince managers to attend the interviewee knowing that they are usually extremely busy. Therefore, I got some help from company's local human resource personnel to get in touch with the interviewees. I reasoned it was not a problem to find the interviewees by thorough sampling method, since I was conducting qualitative study and not aiming to get fully representative sample of the employees working for this company. Thus we decided together with my contact person from the company that I will approach local HR personnel and ask them to nominate managers from their locations. We decided to include three big locations in Finland representing both segments of the company. I approached altogether 15 managers from these locations hoping to get eight to ten interviews. When asking local HR personnel to nominate the managers I asked them to include both white-collar and blue-collar managers and preferably women and men of different ages. This way I was hoping to get some variety to my sample.

Since there were three locations chosen, when contacting the possible interviewees I told them that the interviews are also possible to conduct via phone conference tool that is largely used in the company. I was hoping this would help me to get interviews from the furthest location. I acknowledge that conducting some of the interviews on phone and some on person, the data could be little different. However, since the tool is very widely used in the company, it is very common for the managers to use it in their daily work. Therefore, I do not think it made difference. With the same system, there is a possibility to record the calls, thus allowing me to store the interviews to the same format with the ones conducted on person.

Before conducting the actual interviews I did two pre-interviews to test my questions. Interviewees were also working in this same company, but were not in the managerial

position, and therefore their interviews are not included in the final sample. However, I think it was very useful to have conducted them beforehand. I was able to test my qualitative attitude statements and practice for this method, which was new to me. Before conducting those I was also little worried of the length of my question list. After the pre-interviews, I realized it was good and those interviews lasted about 15 minutes, which was what I anticipated.

I conducted nine interviews. All the interviews took from 15 to 35 minutes. When I approached the interviewees first time, I told the aim is to keep the interviews quite brief, lasting maximum of half an hour. In my opinion, it is possible to get enough information even in a short period of time if the topic is not too personal and they are able to get acquainted with the questions beforehand. Also this served as a factor convincing them to participate more easily. Before interviews took place I sent the questions to each of the interviewees, so that they could take a look at them if they wanted. I did not ask them to prepare in any way, but I felt that it could be easier to conduct the interviews in a short period of time.

Table 1. Interviewees' background information

Segment	WC/BC*	Gender	Age	Subordinates	Years worked in this company	Education
A	WC	W	40-50	5-10	10-20	Graduate degree
A	WC	M	40-50	10-20	20-30	Undergraduate degree
A	WC	M	50-60	10-20	30-40	Undergraduate degree
A	WC	W	30-40	10-20	10-20	Graduate degree
A	BC	M	25-30	20-30	< 5	Undergraduate degree
B	WC	W	25-30	10-20	< 5	Undergraduate degree
B	BC	M	30-40	30 >	< 5	Undergraduate degree
B	WC	M	30-40	5-10	5-10	Undergraduate degree
B	WC	M	25-30	< 5	< 5	Undergraduate degree

\* WC= White-collar worker

BC= Blue-collar worker

Table 1 shows the background information of all the interviewees. To guarantee the anonymity of all interviewees, I do not provide exact numerical information. Even though the case company stays anonymous, there is possibility that personnel working in the company could identify their colleagues when reading the study if exact numbers were provided. In addition, I do not think it makes difference not having the exact numbers when evaluating the results. From the table it is possible to see that this

method of finding interviewees has yielded quite diverse sample. I ended up having five people from one segment and four from the other. This actually does not exactly reflect the actual amount of personnel each segment has, but being very small sample in the first place I decided not to worry too much about the representativeness. However, I think it is good to have both blue-collar and white-collar employees as well as men and women to give possible variety. In addition, people interviewed had been working in the company for different amount of time, which allows me to have different views.

Since all the interviewees were Finnish, the interviews were thus conducted in Finnish. This led to the fact that I had to translate all the quotations used in this paper. I directly translated what they have said, but in all the cases it was not possible to do word-by-word translations, because the meaning of the original sentence would have changed. Therefore, the translations are done so that they convey the original message.

At the end only one was conducted via conference call and all the others were made face-to-face. All face-to-face interviews were conducted on the company's premises, but to protect the identity of people participating, they were conducted on meeting rooms and not on their workstations. Meeting rooms provided also quiet environment. All the interviews except one was recorded, because one of the interviewees preferred not to have it recorded. In this situation I made relatively detailed notes and right after the interview I wrote the whole discussion down. I acknowledge that not having it recorded and transcribed in the same way as all the others, there might be some small changes. However, I feel that the way I did it, I was able to quite well transcribe the discussion based on my notes. The ones that I recorded I transcribed on a word-by-word accuracy.

### **3.3 Analysis of the data**

This study was done in two phases. First, as background information, I went through already collected data from the employee engagement survey conducted on 2012. Company's human resource department had already analyzed it on some level, but there have been big changes in the organization since then and thus, the results cannot be used anymore to describe the company. I used this quantitative data as background

information to help me to build my interview questions for the second phase. Second, I conducted interviews having two separate parts – qualitative attitude statements and theme interview. The data acquired from each of these methods are analyzed in their own ways. Next I will explain more deeply the analysis of both phases and the analyzing processes behind them.

## **Quantitative analysis**

First, I sorted the ready available data again to reflect the current organizational structure. My goal was to analyze it trying to find both positive and negative aspects on how employees see the company. I was looking for any common factors they agree that the company is doing well and therefore make them stay employed. On the other hand, my goal was to try to find some matters that the company should improve to make their employees more committed.

In the survey there were four questions directly aimed to engagement. Those were:

1. I am proud to work for Company X.
2. I rarely think about looking for a new job with another company.
3. I would gladly refer a good friend or family member to Company X for employment.
4. Overall I am extremely satisfied with company X as a place to work.

The company has conducted the employee engagement survey together with external partner. They have together defined that engagement means “the extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organisational success, and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the achievement of organisational goals” (Manager Support Material 2012). According to their definition, the second and third question are to measure commitment and advocacy respectively and those will show the employee commitment to the organization (Manager Support Material 2012).

Unfortunately it was not possible to get the data in the form that it would have been possible to analyze with SPSS. Because the survey was conducted with a partner, all the data was stored in their system. The system is web-based and includes some commands,

which can help one to examine the data on different perspectives. Clearly it has been designed in a way that it could serve the business by providing them some ready-made and analyzed data. This system has an in-built organizational structure giving the possibility to examine the results on the organization level wanted. What you can do with the system is to examine some particular questions sorting the answers by demographics. However, since it was not possible to separate all the answers person by person it was not possible to do real statistical analyzing like analysis of variance and so on. You were only able to examine certain groups of answers.

All this being said, I was somewhat disappointed with what I was able to do with the data. I was hoping to be able to analyze it in a way that I could have been able to run tests to see, for example, if the differences in some answers were significant or not. Now it was more or less only examining, not real statistical analyzing. However, I feel that it still was able to give me some important background knowledge of the organization as a whole. This being the case, I could not get as much information on this one and thus I decided only to use this as background information for forming the questions for my interview.

I sorted the data to imitate the current structure of the organization. After that I examined how they answered to those questions targeted to engagement. Next, and in this case even more relevantly, I started to look the survey as a whole trying to find what are the areas in which the current organization was assessed being good and which questions have received low scores. I did not only examine directly what were the ultimate highest and lowest scores, since some questions or areas might overall get better scores across the organizations. To tackle this issue, the external partner has formed norm value for each question based on extensive data collected from organizations across the world. Therefore, I compared the results of this organization to the norms provided to find how this company is in relation to other companies. This gave me information, which I used when formulating the qualitative attitude statements for the interview.

## **Qualitative analysis**

After my quantitative data turned out to be not as valuable as I was hoping, the qualitative analysis became the main focus in my study. Since I decided to include two separate and method-wise different parts to my interview, it meant two different types of analysis. Qualitative attitude statements were analyzed with qualitative attitude approach while the theme interview exploited thematic content analysis.

## **Thematic content analysis**

In a qualitative research the analyzing is often data-inspired, which means that there are not any hypothesis neither theory to be tested set for the study beforehand. Instead, a researcher's intention is to find out unexpected matters from the data. Therefore, the data is examined in a versatile and detailed manner. This can also be called an inductive reasoning, where the idea is to move from detailed information to more common guidelines. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2001, 155.) In this study I exploited inductive reasoning as the starting point for my qualitative analysis.

After transcription I started thoroughly reading all the interviews. To give me clearer picture, I collected every interviewee's answer to the same question together. Then I started to find similarities and differences in their answers by highlighting the text. Mostly I was interested on how they explained matters related to organizational commitment. After highlighting I grouped similar matters together and simplified them giving descriptive names to similar matters. I did this with all the questions. Then I collected all the groups to one paper to see bigger picture how interviewees have answered and what are the common themes. While doing this I realized that there are three main categories that are used in all of the questions. After this I further analyzed the data combining answers of different questions under a couple of newly invented category questions – *what do I get* and *what matters affect my commitment*. These two questions are used in the results to explain all the categories found.



## **Qualitative attitude approach**

Qualitative attitude approach is methodology that has been developed by Kari Mikko Vesala and Teemu Rantanen during the past 15 years. The idea is to categorize and interpret what matters people are valuing in the statements that are shown to them. It also has some connections to discourse analysis. One specialty behind qualitative attitude approach is the method how the material to be analyzed is collected. (Vesala & Rantanen 2007, 11.) This method uses semi-structured interviews, where “stimulus” is first shown to the interviewee and then asked the person to comment it. Normally statements are used as stimuli, but it could also be something else like picture or short description of some problematic situation. It is essential that the statements are structured in a way that interviewees can clearly take a stand on them. Statements can be about controversial issues, which will lead to the fact that person has to take a stand. (Vesala & Rantanen 2007, 32–33.)

The benefit of this method compared to the typical attitudinal survey is that very rarely people are able to express their stand on something simply by ticking the correct option. Very often people’s opinions are more diverse and stance taking is often connected to explanations, reservations and conditions. It is known that people’s attitudes are different when the target of the attitude changes or is put into different perspective (Vesala & Rantanen 2007, 34–36). For example, there could be statement in employee engagement survey “My contribution is valued”. If person is asked to rate the statement in Likert scale how much he or she agrees with it, it could be hard when person starts to think the statement from different perspectives. One might think that he or she strongly agrees, because colleagues are often praising person of doing the job well. At the same time person might somewhat agree because his or her manager has also given him positive feedback on his or her performance, but person might feel that he is not paid fairly and the contribution and good performance is not reflected on his wage. Therefore, it might be difficult to only choose one option to describe the stance in this issue. Thus, using qualitative attitude statements gives better understanding of the issue allowing interviewees to express their stance and more importantly justify the stance taking.

When the sample used in the analysis is limited, it is possible that not all the attitudes are present in the sample. In some statements interviewees might agree and show quite

similar attitudes without having a counter-attitude, and in some there might be attitudes that are in conflict with one another. (Vesala & Rantanen 2007, 44.) Therefore, it is not uncommon that not all the statements provide very thorough view of the whole issue. What must be remembered in this current study is that the sample consists only nine people in quite big organization. This case study can provide only some idea of the attitudes behind the issue, but most certainly does not tell the whole truth about the situation.

I chose the statements used in the qualitative attitude approach partially based on theory of what matters have been showed to be related to organizational commitment and partially based on the findings from the employee engagement survey. The table 2 shows from where each of the statement come. I tried to use statements from the employee engagement survey, because then the results from this study could enlighten some reasons possibly behind employees stance taking on employee engagement survey. It would also allow possible comparison between the results of this study and the previous survey as well the next one if the same template is used. Therefore, when I found some matters that theory has shown to be related to commitment I tried to find statement measuring matters related to that from the engagement survey. Thus, all but one statement are from there, but reasons for choosing them vary. The ones that were directly from the employee engagement survey were chosen because they have either been getting high scores or low scores on the previous survey, were measuring engagement or reflected well the matters brought up by theory. As can be seen from the table below, it can also have been a mix of these criteria.

Table 2. Reasons for statements

Statement	Employee engagement survey	Theory
My job is challenging and interesting	x/H	
I feel that I have a promising future at Company X	x	Lower order exchange factor
Company X recognizes outstanding performance	x/L	Lower order exchange factor
The people I work with cooperate to get the job done	x/H	Organizational socialization
My manager supports and motivates		Higher order exchange factors, leadership
I'm proud to work for Company X	x/E	
Overall I'm extremely satisfied with Company X as a place to work	x/E	

H= high score

L= low score

E= measuring engagement

The analysis of the qualitative attitude statements can be divided into three phases. In the first phase I went over all the statements one by one collecting the answers from all the interviewees concerning that specific statement together. Then I concentrated to one statement at a time. I categorized the answers based on how positively or negatively they relate to the statement and looked if there was seen some reservations in answers. Basically they formed two groups, one is formed by positive stance taking and the other consists stance taking with reservations. Between all the statements there were not any clear negative stance taking. One interviewee's answer to one statement often consisted both positive stance taking as well as one with reservations. If that was the case I divided the answer and took the parts that were concentrated to, for example positive stance taking, positive group. Therefore, I did not handle one person's answer as a one grouping that person under only one group. I rather concentrated on stance taking and divided the answers according to that into groups. Therefore both groups might have arguments from the same interview. Conducting it this way also made interviewees not very easily identified and thus helped the anonymity. This is one way of analyzing the data by first categorizing the variation in the stance taking and grouping similar ones together. The categorization can be based on the contents, positivity or negativity of the stance taking, as well as how directly or indirectly one expresses the stance. (Vesala & Rantanen 2007, 39.)

In the second phase, I looked into the argumentation behind both groups and further categorized the contents into subgroups. In other words, I paid attention to what were the reasons managers used to explain their stance taking. Looking at those reasons I started grouping similar topics together forming subgroups. The similarity between the stance taking is often defined by the arguments used. Therefore, often the next step is to categorize them to subgroups based on the differences in the argumentation. (Vesala & Rantanen 2007, 40.) I conducted all the previous steps for all the seven statements.

When this was done I started to look all the previous analysis together, which makes the third phase of this analysis. I looked into all the argumentations and subgroups I had created and tried to find similarities in those between all the statements. The combinations of stance taking and argumentation are forming so-called observation classes, which can be said to be attitudes (Vesala & Rantanen 2007, 40). When

analyzing them it was possible to see that argumentations of different statements are mainly centered around three topics. This is how I created the three frameworks (company, work community and work characteristics) introduced in the results.

The results of the first and second phase of the analysis leading to this final outcome are not visible in the results. However, it would not have been able to reach the outcome without conducting all the steps before. This process can somewhat be seen in the results, since the structure of the results is build so that all the frameworks include the categories for both positive stance taking and stance taking with reservations, these are formed with the results of the first phase of the analysis. In addition, I will show what kinds of argumentations were used to explain the stance taking in different statements and those were grouped in the second phase.

Having these qualitative attitude statements at the beginning of the interview served a couple of purposes. First of all I wanted to lead the interviewees to the topic of organizational commitment with task that I thought was easier for them than directly going to open ended questions. Since these are all handling matters that have been seen to be connected to organizational commitment, they can tune their brains to our discussion in the middle of their often hectic work day. Another purpose was to map out how they evaluate the truthfulness of these sentences and what kind of matters they use to reason the stance taking.

### **3.4 Ethics**

On every research ethics must be bear in mind for the entire process. Ethics concern, for example, a selection of the methods and sample as well as how one treats the interviewees and last, how the researcher reports the results. Especially in a business research, when companies are being studied, emerges question of a sponsorship as an ethical question. Very often a researcher might get some compensation for his or her work, which could bring many ethically problematic issues if one is not careful. When company is paying for the study, it could limit or censor the results as well as their reporting and publishing. “This sort of censorship is ethically unsustainable, as it deals

with the integrity of the researcher and research project” (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 67).

Even though I had a contract with the organization, the research was done quite independently without strict orders regarding the study from the company’s side. Matter that makes this independent work possible is that they do not expect certain matters to be found. What the company is interested in is to find any matters explaining the commitment in their organization. I have been able to design the study relatively independently. In addition, one matter that gives more freedom for me is the fact that the company name is not published. It gives the authority to report the results as they are, since the audience does not know what company it is. In addition, the topic studied is not too controversial or does not concern matters that could harm the company, which also most probably led to the fact that I was able to do my research very independently.

In the results, interviewees’ direct quotations are not coded to show which one of the interviewees said what. This is done to protect the identities of the participants. Sometimes, when talking about specific matters, it could have been possible for someone inside the organization to identify the person, if all the quotations behind one code name were collected together. When choosing the quotations to be used as examples in the results, I marked for myself from which interviewee every quotation came. This helped me to keep track of the quotations used and I was able to check that I used quotations from different people to back up the conclusions I made. Therefore, when providing examples related to same topic, I have made sure that they consist of different interviewee’s comments.

## 4 RESULTS

The matters explaining why employees feel committed to the organization are categorized into three groups in this study. The Figure 3 summarizes the findings based on these three categories. First group consist factors directly linked to the company and the business field it is operating. Even though this is quite self-explanatory since organizational commitment is studied, the organization was seen to be much more than just the company and thus, the second category is formed by the colleagues working in the same company, in other words, the work community. Finally, the third category that found in this study affecting the organizational commitment consists of characteristics of the work itself. The contents of the position as well as challenges and opportunities provided by the organization they are working in affect employees' commitment to the organization.

Organizational commitment					
Company		Work community		Work characteristics	
INTERVIEW	QAA*	INTERVIEW	QAA	INTERVIEW	QAA
Interesting global business field	Future prospects	Sociality and social cohesion	Atmosphere	Professional development	Versatility
Reliable salary payment	Size of the company	Content to life	Cooperation	Ability to see big picture	Manager
Long traditions	Recognition	Functionality	Meaningfulness	Content to life	Interest
Future prospects		Manager	Recognition	Versatility and challenges	Change of working life
Company culture		Personal importance		Freedom vs. responsibilities	Workload
				Career advancement	

\*QAA= Qualitative attitude approach

Figure 3. Matters affecting organizational commitment

It is interesting, that I was able to categorize all the data both from the qualitative attitude statements as well as qualitative interviews under the same categories seen in the Figure 3. In the Figure 3 you can also see the division between matters raised during qualitative attitude approach (“QAA”) and the theme interview (“interview”) categorized under the three main categories explained before.

In qualitative attitude approach categories, which combine different argumentations, are often called frameworks. Therefore, from now on I will use the term framework when talking about the categories in the qualitative attitude approach. The term category will be used when referring to the very same three groups associated with theme interviews. From the Figure 3 on previous page it can be seen that even though the topics raised during theme interviews and arguments used to explain the stance taking in the qualitative attitude statements are similar, there are still some unique matters mentioned during each of the methods used.

Table 3. Qualitative attitude statements’ stance taking by frameworks

Statement	Company		Work community		Work characteristics	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
1. My job is challenging and interesting	x	x	x		x	x
2. I feel that I have a promising future at Company X	x	x				
3. Company X recognizes outstanding performance	x	x	x			
4. The people I work with cooperate to get the job done			x	x		x
5. My manager supports and motivates			x		x	
6. I’m proud to work for Company X	x	x	x			
7. Overall I’m extremely satisfied with Company X as a place to work	x	x	x		x	

What is interesting is that not only those frameworks can be found in different statements, but also all of those frameworks were used to explain both the positive stance taking as well as the one with reservations. The division of stance taking statement by statement can be seen on Table 3 above. Plusses and minuses indicate whether the stance has been positive or one with reservations. When looking at the use of different frameworks statement by statement it is possible to see that the reasoning behind stance taking was often centered on one of the three frameworks. The reason for that is the fact that some of the statements are quite specific concentrating on certain

type of issue. However, in almost all the statements reasoning also included factors belonging to other frameworks. Some of the arguments mentioned here were similar to those mentioned during other parts of the interview, but there are also some unique matters raised. Having the qualitative attitude approach as a part of my interview served as good addition bringing new side that would not have been possible to reach with my current interview questions.

I will introduce all the three frameworks one by one and explain in which statements they were used as an explanation, as well as shed light to reasoning behind the stance taking. Few words about stance taking, mainly interviewees took positive stance in all of the statements. However, the amount of positivity varied from one interviewee to another as well as from one question to another. There were not any statements that raised strong negative stance taking, but many of the positive stance takings did include reservations. From the explanations interviewees gave to their stance taking it was possible to see that there were some negative matters as well. It is good to bear in mind when reading the analysis about the negative matters, that the overall feeling the interviewees had was positive.

The structure of the chapter will follow the categorization found in the analysis. With each category I will start by introducing the findings from the theme interview and then I will continue with the results of the qualitative attitude approach regarding the framework connected to the category in question.

## **4.1 Company**

### **Theme interview**

The first category is very strongly associated with the company itself. When talking about organizational commitment, it is no surprise that some of the matters raised affecting employees' commitment are directly related to the company in question. Matters raised varied from smaller ones to larger entities.



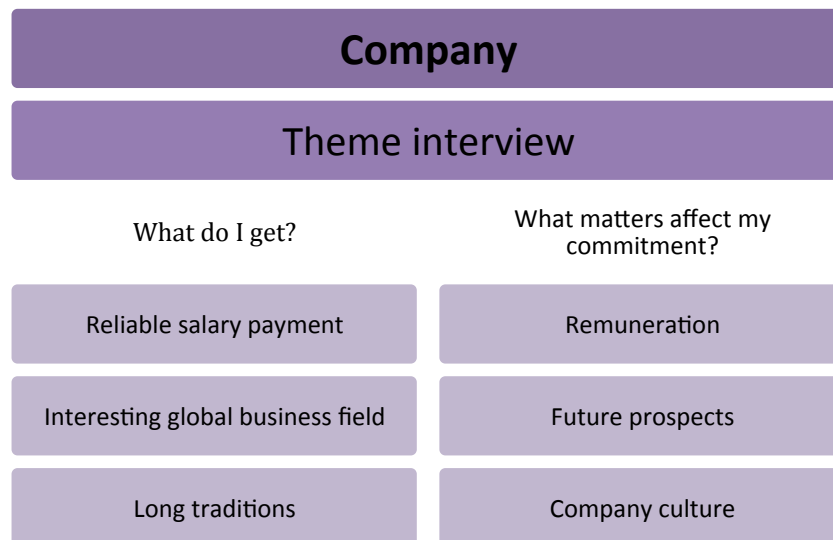


Figure 4. Summary of theme interview findings regarding company

Figure 4 gives a brief introduction of the topics mentioned during the theme interviews regarding the company. The order of the topics in the figure is representing the order how much each of the topics were discussed during the interviews. The higher it is, more discussion there was. From the figure it can be seen that there were very basic matters mentioned, like salary being paid on time but also more complex and larger entities, like the future prospects of the business itself. I will elaborate all the topics in the coming sections.

### **What do I get from the company?**

Being part of the company allows employees to enjoy variety of positive matters. What is interesting, almost all the same matters were raised when talking about company's strengths. One of the most obvious ones, although one that many thought cannot be taken as granted these days, is the fact that the company is very reliable what comes to paying salary. Employee gets paid on time as well as of every minute he or she has worked for the company. This was often associated with the fact that the company is large having solid financial standing providing more stable economic situation. However, this factor is one that always should be taken care of, kind of like constant in an employment. The value of this is only emphasized in situations when this is not working properly.

Besides that there were other matters associated specifically with this company that the interviewees found to be strengths and made employees feel committed to it. It was thought that the company provides them interesting challenges being on an interesting field of business. More results regarding the connection between the field of business and commitment will be introduced later in the section about qualitative attitude approach.

The fact that the company is fairly large enables wide range of opportunities, for example work positions in different units inside the company: *“from employee’s point of view strengths of [name of the company] obviously are that there are many kinds of possibilities offered, inside you can also apply for different jobs, there’s a lot of opportunities to give”*. In addition, a global company can further enhance employees’ opportunities inside the company as well provide very interesting multicultural field of business to work in. To demonstrate it one interviewee put it: *“being global fascinates, you get to see things on a wide scope”*. The opportunities for new work tasks that the company has provided for interviewees during their careers in this company were seen important matters affecting their organizational commitment positively: *“when you start feeling, let’s not say bored, but you get very familiar with you work, it does affect your commitment. It’s not that great and wonderful anymore, but when your work changes, then your commitment increases for some time”*. This was one topic that raised much commenting on the qualitative attitude statements as well, therefore I will come back to this topic later in this paper.

Company’s long history and traditions were also seen as strength within this company: *“Well very first thing that comes to my mind are traditions, [name of the company] has great traditions. Many things have been made here and that way there’re capabilities for many kinds of things. – – That’s a strength for sure”*. Therefore, it was seen positive that the company has been in the business for a long time. Also not only what can be seen in the previous comment but also was raised in other discussions is that having spread the business is good. When the company has wide range of capabilities it is not that vulnerable in the changing economic situations.

### **What matters related to the company affect my commitment?**

The company has many attributes that the interviewees associated with organizational commitment and thus, the company was obviously seen important part affecting the level of commitment. It is important that employees feel that their contribution to the organization is valued and they have a proper remuneration of their work contribution given. Like mentioned before, salary is one part of this remuneration, but not merely the only one. The work benefits that you are allowed to enjoy when working for this company were thought to be much better than in some other companies. There were many matters mentioned, for example, occupational health services, recreational clubs and sick fund. Some of the interviewees wanted to highlight that even though the salary level is not thought very high in this company, the other benefits offered compensate it very well. I will further explain the effect of remuneration later in the section consisting results of qualitative attitude approach.

The possibilities employees feel that the company will have in the future also affect their level of commitment. If it is thought that there are growth opportunities for business, it will increase their organizational commitment. It was mentioned that those situations during one's career, when one has been able to see that the company implements new technologies to ease the work tasks and thus shows that it develops and moves forward, have increased the organizational commitment. In that way also the company shows the mutual commitment to employees. In addition to this, what was seen extremely important is that the employee can affect the way that the future business is shaped by his or her own contribution at work. This is clearly demonstrated in the following comment: *"for me personally it [the factor affecting commitment] is that I believe that we have possibilities to go forward and with your own work you can affect how we are doing in the future"*.

On the contrary, the weak economic situation was brought up as one matter that definitely affects negatively organizational commitment: *"this general economic situation in Finland and in the world affects indirectly so much and the negative consequences of that are the employee co-operation negotiations, if we didn't have those, I don't see any reason why you couldn't commit to this"*. In cases where you are always unsure what will happen next, when will be the time for co-operation negotiations in order to find savings and possible lay off employees, it is extremely hard

to find the trust and that way commit to the organization. It needs to be a two-way tie. Both have to be able to trust one another in their endeavors reaching a mutual goal. If the employee cannot trust the company he or she will not be able to bond with it either. Employee co-operation negotiations were also mentioned as specific point on interviewees' careers affecting organizational commitment negatively. In addition, this was very strongly brought up during the commenting on qualitative attitude statements, and thus, I will continue with this topic later in this paper.

The last company-related matter that interviewees mentioned affecting commitment is the culture. Open and honest leadership culture should be aimed in the company. This was thought to be more than just individual managers in the organization, rather it is the premises that the company creates for this kind of leadership to be possible inside the company. Interviewees saw that this has improved during the past years and mentioned one matter that could have led to it the fact that company is putting more effort on improving the leadership by, for example, having set up wide leadership training program.

### **Qualitative attitude approach**

From the Figure 5 on the next page it can be seen that under this framework there were very similar matters used as explanation both for negative and positive stance taking. The topics listed under negative and positive refer to the topics that were used to comment the stance taking. This highlights well the issue that often interviewees do not have uniform attitude towards something, but rather, different aspect of the same issue might raise very different attitudes.

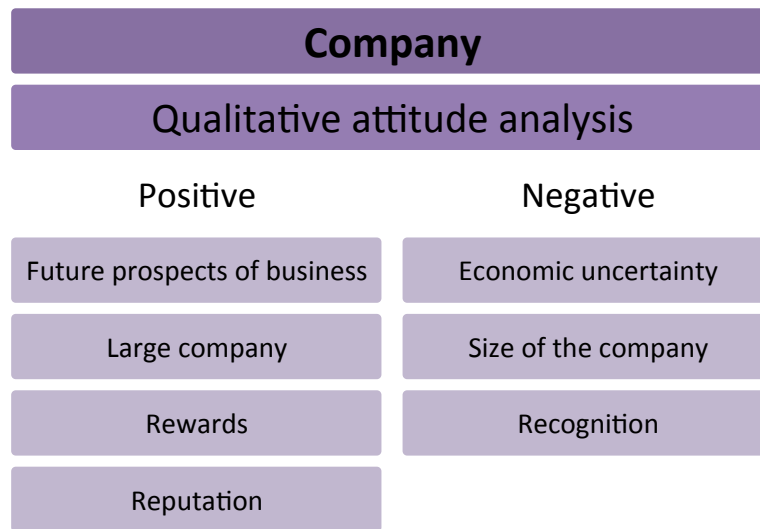


Figure 5. Summary of the qualitative attitude approach findings regarding company

### Arguments used to explain positive stance taking

Under Company -framework two statements that raised the most commentary were clearly the ones where company was mentioned. Furthermore, topics under this framework can be divided under four categories visible in the Figure 5. Those are field of business, big company providing many challenges, rewarding and reputation.

In the comments of the first statement, “My job is challenging and interesting”, it was brought up quite clearly how the field of business you are working on can affect how you see your work. When you get to work on issues that you find meaningful you will see your work more interesting. One interviewee explained why the job is interesting with the following: *“you know for sure that you’re working on a field that has personal meaning and global meaning as well”*. Furthermore, if one thinks the field he or she is on is globally important now and even more in the future, it will increase how positively one sees his or her work. *“It is interesting because I’m on [the field of business] and these things are now gaining a lot of attention and that’s why I believe it’s also an important field in the future”*.

Likewise in the second statement, “I feel that I have a promising future at Company X”, argumentation behind a very strong agreeing was the positive future of the field the manager is working on. *“Of course when thinking this field, there’s huge amount of*

*potential for development, there's business".* Some also saw their field important for future: *"this kind of energy and environment issues are the ones that will carry on in the company. I'm, unpleasant to say, in a way on a safe field, when thinking about future".*

Argumentation for the positive stance taking on the last statement, "Overall I'm extremely satisfied with Company X as a place to work" also included business field related commenting. *"We are in some way on the top of technology, and have certain type of drive, and really are working with that kinds of world-class products"* was one of the comments raised about this matter. Employees' satisfaction was related to the field they are able to work on.

The second category under this company framework is the opportunities that the large company can offer. This argumentation was used when explaining positive stance taking in the second statement, "I feel that I have a promising future at Company X". *"[Name of the company] is so big, so there're so many opportunities and options to many directions, and at least until now it has felt that you can affect those yourself."* Another interviewee also thought that the company has succeeded in giving new opportunities: *"let's say that all the time I have been given new and challenging jobs"*. Therefore, it can be said that people who already had experience that the company has helped them by trying to provide new challenges, felt that this was one reason that they agreed to this statement.

The different types of opportunities were also used in the argumentation for the last statement "Overall I'm extremely satisfied with Company X as a place to work". On interviewee brought up that being able to change jobs within the company in every couple of years was something very positive for that person's career development as well as career advancement. In addition, this argumentation was used in the sixth statement "I'm proud to work for Company X" to back up a very positive stance taking. Large company was definitely seen as a big advantage.

The third category is rewarding. More than half of the interviewees showed agreement to the third statement, "Company X recognizes outstanding performance", by explaining how they see that the company is recognizing outstanding performance. The company has set up a company-wide award system. Every year there are multiple nominees, usually groups of people, based on some outstanding work achievement. After a certain procedure one group is selected as a winner. Many interviewees brought

this up as a positive matter: *“here’s a couple of people who get every year some [name of the company] Awards, those are good”*. However, even though it was said as something good, it also received some critique: *“it’s like, we are such a big company, that your thing gets there, you need a little luck I would say”*. To sum it up, they feel it is good that the company has these build-in mechanisms for awarding, but there are so many different kinds of good achievements that could be nominated inside the company. Therefore, to be selected to receive the extra notion, some employees feel it is more about luck than actual contribution.

It was also mentioned that company gives some other types recognitions as well: *“we do have different kinds of recognitions, president awards, and others as well”*. These recognitions are visible on company’s intranet every once in a while. In addition, the intranet was seen to work as one way of recognition: *“yes of course something [good performance] can always be brought up and highlighted in our intranet”*. At the same time it could be seen that these were not taken too seriously: *“they do are good, I read those myself from [name of the intranet], when there are these kinds, they do are quite fun”*.

One matter related to recognition was also raised in the last statement, *“Overall I’m extremely satisfied with Company X as a place to work”*. It was thought very important that the company is offering other things besides the salary to its’ employees. Even though the salary level is not too high, the company supports employees’ recreation activities like culture and sport as well as has good occupational health care for employees.

Lastly, one company-related matter that came through very strongly in the argumentation of positive stand taking in the sixth statement, *“I’m proud to work for Company X”* was the good reputation the company is holding. Many interviewees commented this in their arguments, like this: *“this is a well known brand and people think of this as a good place to work”*. Some of interviewees even thought this as being the most important matter making them feel very proud of the company: *“I definitely am [proud]. I think that it has a good reputation. I’m very proud”*.

## **Arguments used to explain reservations in stance taking**

There can be seen three relatively similar categories behind the reasoning clarifying the reservations as what were in the reasoning for positive stance taking. The first category is the current economic situation. The second category is formed by factors related to the size of the company. Finally, the last category consist matters about the recognition.

The matters related to current economic situation and how the company is dealing with them forms the first category. These matters were raised in many of the arguments telling the reasons behind reservations in different statements. In the second statement, “I feel that I have a promising future at Company X”, this was seen very clearly. The current economic situation was often mentioned as precondition before they were ready to state the positive stance. Many of the interviewees brought up their concern about the current economic situation by showing uncertainty in their answers. They were positive about their future with the condition that the company itself has a future: *“If there’s work in [name of the company] and in Finland in this field in the first place. If that’s the case, then yes I feel.”* If these external situations were not taken into consideration, they all felt that they have a positive future in this company.

It was also brought up bringing the positive stance taking down on the sixth statement, “I’m proud to work for Company X”. When asking for clarification for stance taking that was somewhat obscure, person answered: *“If you want to find some reason for that, it’s these continuous employee co-operation negotiations, and especially when it’s hard to understand why. In every other way I think this is quite good”*. It was also brought up in other comments under this statement. The fact that employees cannot always understand the reasons why company lays off people after co-operation negotiations was also brought up in the argumentation of the also statement, “Overall I’m extremely satisfied with Company X as a place to work”. In their opinion it looks like the company has somewhat of a tradition of laying off small amounts of people in every couple years. It has caused confusion and also it was easy to see in all the times when people talked about this that this is the biggest reason affecting employees’ commitment at the moment.

To continue with the second category, the size of the company was brought up in the reasoning used to back up reservations in the sixth statement “I’m proud to work for Company X”. One interviewee thought that since the company is so big, it is very hard



to relate to. Before when the company was not that big this person thought it was easier to relate to it. Since the company has many different units this person thought that the smaller ones do not receive as much attention from the management and their work is not shown that much on the strategy of this company. This was seen to bring down the personal feeling the person has for the company.

The fact that company is very big was also mentioned in the argumentations of the last statement, “Overall I’m extremely satisfied with Company X as a place to work”. Even though being big has many benefits, it also brings some negative side effects. One mentioned during the argumentation was the bureaucracy, especially what is related to managing human resource. This was not only seen a problem in this company but in all large companies.

The last matter associated with the size of the company was the organizational structure. On the first statement, “My job is challenging and interesting”, some of the interviewees who at the beginning were completely agreeing brought up some reservations when talking about the reasons behind it. It was thought that the organizational structure could make the job challenging by making the daily work more difficult. There was some dissatisfaction with the changes in the organizational structure and it was thought those actually make some units to compete against each other rather than working together towards mutual goal, success of the company.

The last category under this framework is the recognition. The statement “Company X recognizes outstanding performance” was thought complicated because the statement has the name of the company in it. They argued that mostly recognition is not coming from a company level, but on the other hand, it was not thought necessary or relevant to come from the company level. The following sample from one of the interviews lights this issues:

Interviewee: *I have extremely good manager and he does recognize, and this organization as well. But [name of the company] on itself, I don't know if there's anybody from other parts coming to say, or tell or see...*

EA: *So this work community near you is the one giving it..?*

Interviewee: *Yes. On the contrary I don't know how or what could be the other one in [name of the company], who would give the feedback.*

EA: *So you haven't felt that it should come from some other..?*

Interviewee: *No, like I don't really know, who else would see my contribution than my manager here.*

Therefore, quite often it was seen that the company is thought of something quite distant. Even though the previous comment shows that the person thinks the organization gives recognition, it was still not thought of as the company giving it. Organization was thought as something closer to the manager, the work community that the person is working daily. There were also other similar comments in other interviews, where interviewees thought that it is not necessary that the recognition comes from the company level: *“in a long run I don’t look for any [name of the company]-level [recognition]”* or *“I can’t come up with a way how to organize, that kind of [name of the company]-level recognition”*.

Another issue that was brought up backing up the reservations and showing critique in this statement was the difficulties managers face when trying to give recognition for their subordinates. Because all the people interviewed were managers it was clearly highlighted that in their daily work it is not easy for them to give the recognition to their subordinates and the company will not support them enough in this process. This can be demonstrated with the following argument: *“when you try to support your own team members, it’s not easy. That is not supported. It’s no use to beg for raise, even for other people”*. Similarly it was seen that the company does give recognition for the job that is executed extremely well, but managers feel that there should be other types of possibilities available for the work that is done from day to day:

*Maybe those could be more available for managers, those means of recognizing, to have something with what to guide this group and motivate, like those most outstanding efforts are recognized but there’s a lot sort of like basic work in the middle, where the salary is paid, so there could be more carrots available for managers.*

## **4.2 Work community**

### **Theme interviews**

As clearly as there was type in interviewees’ speech consisting elements about the company, there was type in their speech having factors about work community. Figure 6 on the next page assembles all the topics raised during the theme interview under the

two category questions. In the coming sections I will elaborate on all the topics with examples.



Figure 6. Summary of theme interview findings regarding work community

**What do I get from the work community?**

There were three attributes about work community that were strongly mentioned as matters one can get when being part of this company. First one is the sociality. It was thought very important that one is able to work with other people and have social interaction with colleagues during the day. The matters discussed are both about work as well as about private-life matters. Therefore, having nice colleagues in the organization was thought as being strength in this company. Interviewees were very satisfied with the people they are working with, and thought that the sociality they are able to be part of in their work community is very important.

The second is the social cohesion that you feel with the people working with you: *“in this site it feels like there’s still some of that old industrial-family type of spirit. Here is lots of history here and a lot of that kind of unity or something. It’s nice to be part of this [name of the site] folk”*. This comment highlights the fact that the people working in the same site forms certain, special type of community and one can be proud of being part of that. Even though the company is large and widely spread geographically, employees feel united with the smaller community working in the same site as they are. The feeling of unity was thought unique compared to other companies.

Finally, work community was thought to bring content to their life. Employees spend much time in their workplace and therefore work is often thought as an important factor in one's life. Having similar type of personalities around you, makes your day much more meaningful. This highlights the importance of people working around you, since not only the content of the work or the company itself is able to satisfy the person. The work community is having a crucial role in bringing content to one's life. If employee enjoys working with his or her colleagues, it is be easier to enjoy the work and it could lead to deeper commitment.

### **How matters related the work community affect my organizational commitment?**

During the interviews all the interviewees also mentioned matters how work community is affecting their organizational commitment. Most of the matters raised here are also very same as what they indicated as being strengths of this company. Topics mentioned can be combined to three groups – personal importance, functionality of the organization and manager.

First, when talking about the meaning of the work community and the people they are working with, the most descriptive expression was the comparison to a family. Several managers not only mentioned this but also emphasized it in their speech: *“in a way it's lifestyle, like I said [name of the company] family. This is like my second family”*. Comparison to family is a very strong indication of how important employees think the work community is. It is much more than just people they work with, they care for each other in a way that family members do. The people you are working with have personal importance for you.

Second, it was mentioned that it is important to one's organizational commitment how well the organization around the employee works. In addition, this was mentioned as one of the strengths that the company has. This means that people working around you have same goals and you are trying to reach the goals working together. Interviewees indicated that during their career within this company the times when they have been working in organizations that have extremely good work atmosphere, their organizational commitment has been affected in a positive way. Work community was also seen to increase the satisfaction and affect how much one enjoys his or her work.

*“It does affect your commitment that you feel good coming to work and enjoy working together”*. In addition, having good relationship with colleagues was brought up several times both being strength of the company and affecting the organizational commitment. *“And of course that would decrease the organizational commitment if there were tense relationship”*. From the comment can be seen that this person felt their work community is having good relationship like all the interviewees who mentioned this matter. It was seen important and the consequences of it being bad were realized.

Similarly, it was thought that overall the employees in this company are very committed. This was demonstrated with the fact that there are many same people still working there as what have been for decades. This was seen as an absolute strength: *“I think it really is a strength that people know each other well, it makes easier working together in many ways”*.

Third, employees’ manager was also seen having a big role on subordinate’s commitment and interviewees indicated their manager very often being the factor increasing or decreasing the level of their commitment during the career. When person has had inspiring and motivating manager who trusts employees giving them more challenges, interviewees thought that at those times their commitment has increased. On the other hand, it was also mentioned that when manager is too autocratic and manages with negative leadership style, it truly decreases the level of the commitment. Overall, these negative cases were very few during interviewees’ careers and having good managers was seen a strength in this company and was mentioned often during the interviews. One matter that was thought very important is respect and how it is shown to employees. That is something that manager truly has an effect. The following demonstrates the issue well: *“[it’s important] that you’re being respected, and you can somehow see it. You get that kind of feeling that you’re important”*. Of course sometimes this feeling can come from the colleagues, but manager in his or her position is very important in impacting how subordinate values him or herself. This feeling of being respected was mentioned to affect commitment in a positive way. Another matter that was connected to the manager is the leadership style. There must be a *“fair game”* like one of the interviewees put it.

## Qualitative attitude approach

This was the most used framework in all of the statements, explanations centered around this appeared in six out of seven statements. From the Figure 7 it can be seen that mostly this was used to explain positive stance taking, but there was also one where work community related matter was used in stance taking with reservations.

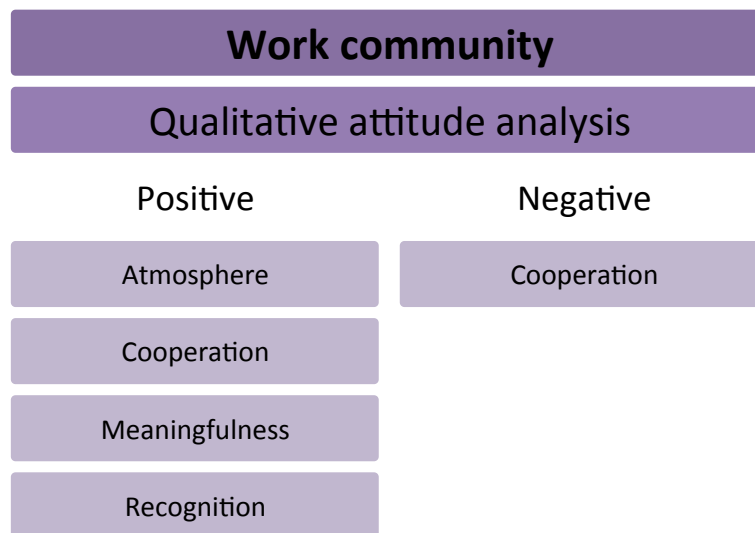


Figure 7. Summary of the qualitative attitude approach findings regarding work community

## Arguments used to explain positive stance taking

It is quite obvious that work community –framework was very much present in the fourth statement: “The people I work with cooperate to get the job done”, since people were asked to evaluate the people they are working with. Therefore, this statement had the most comments linked to work community. However, there were many different types of comments raised in when explaining the stance taking. Argumentation used to explain positive stance taking included four themes – good atmosphere, cooperation, meaning of the work community and recognition.

Firstly, it was clearly seen in this sample that team spirit, one component in good atmosphere, is highly valued and that was used as an argument to back up the fourth statement. This can be demonstrated with the following: “*we here have extremely good spirit, and we do stuff together*”. It is to be seen that good team spirit and certain type of attitude is seen as precondition for cooperation to be successful.

*In our team we have kind of like 'leave no man behind' – type of attitude. It's also demonstrated in very small [things], when somebody drops a pen there's like immediately two people picking it up. And also some concrete problem, it's like everybody's problem.*

Good atmosphere was also used as an argument on positive stance taking on the sixth statement, "I'm proud to work for Company X". Being listed as one factor affecting employee feeling proud of the company, it proves that it is appreciated quite highly. *"It's good and homely to be here in every way"* one interviewee put it. As well as in the last statement "Overall I'm extremely satisfied with Company X as a place to work" good atmosphere was brought up as one reason to be satisfied with the company: *"There has always been laid-back and fair atmosphere here"*.

Secondly, one strong argument that came through in many discussions was the fact their colleagues give support to one another to tackle the issues: *"we're sometimes very flexible to many directions, but also the types of challenges we face, are that type that we need the support from [name of the unit] and like that"*. Giving support was also seen working very well in the work community they are working in: *"and at least I think that this groups of [name of the unit] we do give support to each other and work together"*.

On the other hand arguments for this fourth statement also consisted expressions that cooperation is the only way of coping in the business. It was expressed quite strongly that there is no other way: *"it's the only way of making it alive. And there is no way this our stuff could be managed by one person"*. This came across many times and besides being the only way of getting the job done it was seen as affecting the content of the work: *"you couldn't really manage the work on your own, you must cooperate to make everything work and also meaningful to you. If someone just keeps pushing his head to the wall, it just won't work"*. In these statements we can see that working together is something very normal for these people. They have noticed the benefits of it and use in their daily work.

Thirdly, meaning of the work community was seen important affecting one's organizational commitment. Interviewees commented the positive stance taking for the first statement, "My job is challenging and interesting", with the meaning of work community. Interaction with other people was thought as important factor shaping the work: *"I get to work with many stakeholders and especially interaction with customers"*

*makes it more interesting*". Also, the possibilities that your work tasks create for you to be part of projects in variety of organizational units and organizational structures within the company was seen to make the work more interesting: *"it gives you extra color for your daily work of course"*.

Lastly, recognition was also strongly connected to work community. In the third statement, "Company X recognizes outstanding performance", work community was brought up several times when commenting where the interviewees think the real recognition is coming from. It was thought important when the recognition comes closer to the person: *"like I wouldn't say that it's [name of the company], it's the people"*. To emphasize the meaning of the work community in recognizing the performance, it was seen important that one succeeds in the daily work carried out in the work community and gets the recognition from that: *"better recognition comes from those closer to you, your own work community and your success in it"*. Giving feedback was seen as the primary way how the work community recognizes the performance. It was brought up how giving feedback has increased lately in the work community. There were many possible matters mentioned leading to this, one being the manager trainings that the company has emphasized lately. Similarly, it was seen that since the work is very hectic these days, people want to thank and recognize if someone takes the time to help out others.

### **Arguments used to explain reservations in stance taking**

There was only one work community related matter used to comment a stance taking with reservations. In the fourth statement, "The people I work with cooperate to get the job done", the extent of cooperation was brought up as something that could be improved. It was thought that cooperation between different work units is insufficient. Their own units or teams work closely together, but everything beyond that is not working that smoothly: *"we do have these teams, and like you saw we all sit in these open offices, those are just incredible those silos, even though there shouldn't be, when you think it, we all know each other and so"*. It was thought that it is just too easy for one group of employees to be very separate from the other groups. They all brought up how it should not be this way, but too often it is. It was noted that in the last place it is the customer who is suffering from this.



4.3 Work characteristics

Theme interviews

The third category made based on the reasons why employees are committed to the organization is their own job and responsibilities that come with it. Matters related to this were raised very often in all the interviews making it the most important in this sample. Similarly as in the previous sections, Figure 8 highlights the work-related topics that interviewees brought up during the theme interviews.

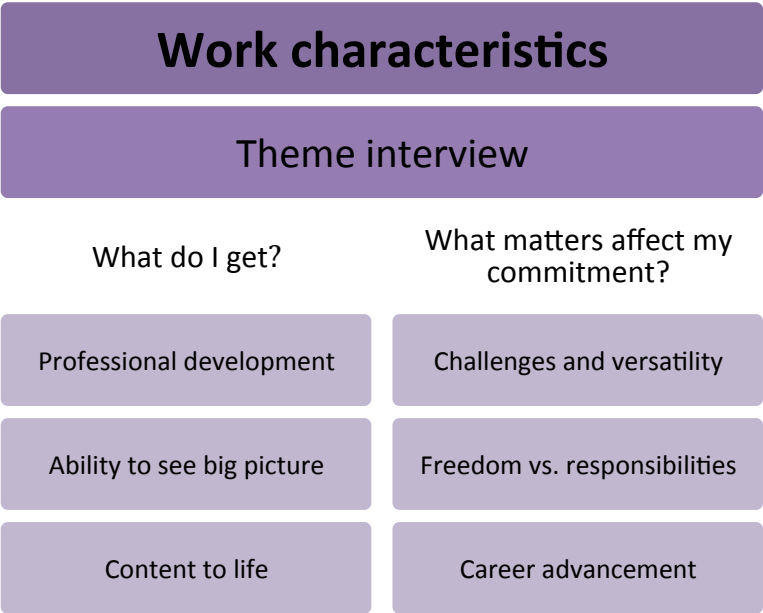


Figure 8. Summary of theme interview findings regarding work characteristics

What do I get for myself?

There were three matters connected to employee’s work characteristics mentioned that employees are able to get for themselves when working for this company. Firstly, work tasks enable them professional development. Secondly, through challenging tasks one is also able to develop the way they perceive matters in a different way, in other words,

learn to see the big picture. Lastly, the type of work you do will bring content to your life.

When person has a chance to work with interesting work tasks and positions, it truly affects how committed they are to the organization. One matter how employees benefit from this kind of position is that they are able to further develop themselves. It was mentioned many times how important it is that one can have challenging tasks where there is possibility to develop one's own capabilities and professional skills. This kind of learning by doing and learning from experience was seen very substantial factor during their career affecting organizational commitment.

In addition, these kinds of challenging tasks make it possible for employees to learn to see the bigger picture. When you are working with tough challenges to which there are not easy solutions, one must start to approach the problem from different angles in order to find the solution. This type of thinking teaches to see connections between different matters. One must be aware of all the different aspects affecting their work, as well as not only think what they are doing but how everything is connected and their work will affect to various other matters. When working in a multinational company where challenges vary daily, one must not only be able to see the bigger picture but also all the different angles of it.

*Here you can see very widely and all the time you learn new things. And if you learn to see something like this and the same thing when you go [showing with hands, that you look from different side], it's completely different. You must be aware of these. – – When you learn to see things from different angles, that's very rewarding.*

Like seen in the previous citation, employees find it positive. The company they are working for and the work tasks they are able to do help them to develop. Like one interviewee said, if he/she had chosen different career path and ended up working in a small Finnish company, the person would probably be quite different person these days. That's how important it was seen that you are able to work with challenging tasks in a multinational company.

Person's own work was also seen to provide interest to their lives altogether: *mostly it [working in this company] means content to life and interest*". Like previously mentioned employees' work community is one factor bringing social content to their lives, in the similar way it was thought that it is important to have interesting work tasks

bringing intellectual challenges and content to one's life. Work was thought to be a place where one can express him or herself through the work tasks.

### **What matters related to the work characteristics affect my commitment?**

From the discussions during the theme interviews can be found large number of factors that the interviewees mentioned how their own work task, position or responsibilities affect their organizational commitment. The matters raised are versatility of and challenging work tasks, the amount of freedom and responsibilities, and lastly career advancement. From the times these topics were brought up one can also make a conclusion, that this is very important factor in this sample.

Firstly, it was thought significant that person's work is challenging and interesting. Having challenges was seen very positive matter, and many of the interviewees mentioned that their work contained those: *"it [working in this company] means challenges and challenging oneself everyday, and on the other hand also exceeding oneself. You can truly everyday try out what you are made of"*. The way how the company works also helps employees to have challenges and develop themselves: *"and then of course, it goes more to the challenge side [of where the company has succeeded], that everything is not brought ready made to the table. That you're given some target, and the swing how to get there, that's something you can figure out yourself"*. It was also often brought up that it is important to have not only challenging tasks but also challenging task that vary. The variety is definitely one important aspect affecting person's organizational commitment. Challenging an interesting work tasks were mentioned often also being as turning points in their career making them more committed.

Secondly, besides challenges and interest, there were other matters associated with one's work tasks mentioned to have a relationship with organizational commitment. It was thought important that you can have freedom and, on the other hand, responsibility in your work task. Being promoted to manager position and thus getting more responsibilities were thought important times in their careers affecting commitment in a positive way. Since all the interviewees were managers, having certain amount of freedom and responsibility is very natural. What is meant with freedom here is that the

manager can design how the work is done without too strict rules and restrictions from managers above him or her. In addition, it was seen important that your own work has significance to the bigger picture, to put it differently, that your work contribution affects how the entire business will look like.

Lastly, yet another matter that was raised during the discussion was the possibilities to advance in one's career. Interviewees thought it is important when thinking about committing oneself to the organization, that you are able to see your future in the company. They are having certain hopes what comes to natural career advancement and company has its role in communicating and offering those opportunities for employees. Interviewees mentioned specifically these types of changes in their own careers as being commitment boosters. The fact that one is able to see that his or her work is appreciated and moreover, someone in the organization is able to realize the potential the person is having, makes the person more committed to the organization.

In conclusion, it was seen important that one's work is aligned with the expectations, however every person might have different expectations rising from matters that are most important at the moment. Due to personal life someone might not want to travel very much nor have very hectic work life certain period of his or her career while another person might at the same time enjoy these very same matters having clear goal at fast advancing on one's career. Therefore, to fulfill employees' expectations about work task is not something where similar matters work for everyone. Overall interviewees thought that their expectations toward the work tasks have been fulfilled or even exceeded, even though those might have taken longer period of time to happen. Many indicated that when they face changes in their work tasks, they face them open-minded without having too clear picture in mind how the work is going to be. This has helped them to enjoy the new tasks and challenges.

### **Qualitative attitude approach**

Work characteristics related commenting was in five out seven statements. Figure 9 on the next page shows the topics used to comment stance taking. Even though there can be seen two different matters used to explain reservations in the stance taking, commenting related to the negative issues was very little under this framework.

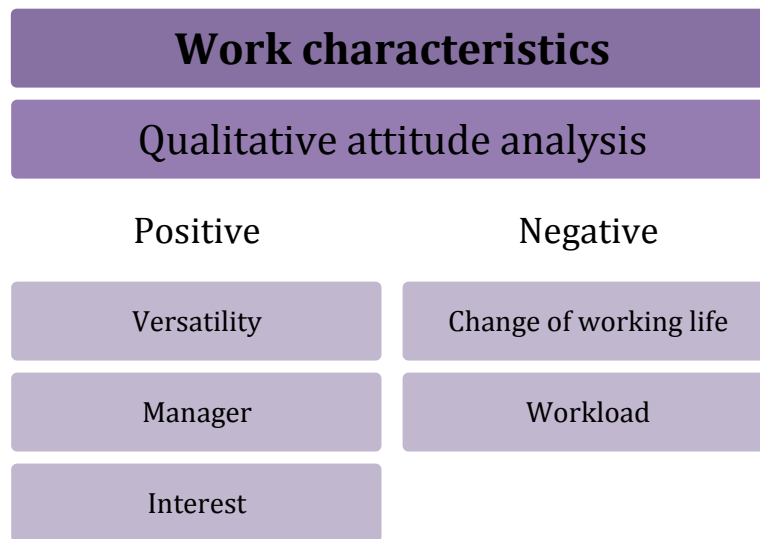


Figure 9. Summary of qualitative attitude approach findings regarding work characteristics

### Arguments used to explain positive stance taking

Like it was in the previous framework, also in this one most of the comments related to work characteristics were raised in the argumentation of the statement mostly targeted towards this topic. Here it was the first one: “My job is challenging and interesting”. However, there were other statements too that consisted argumentation related to work characteristics. In this framework the argumentation used to explain positive stance taking can be divided into three groups. The first one is versatility of work tasks. The second group has arguments linked to employee’s manager. Finally the third argument used is that work is seen very interesting.

To start with versatility, in the first statement “My job is challenging and interesting”, interviewees mainly took extremely positive stand. From the argumentation, it can be seen that versatility of work tasks is most important matter affecting this. Most of the interviewees brought it up and it can be seen from the following comment. “*When thinking about my job, it’s the versatility and variability that is the best*”. Many listed different kinds of task that are included in their role indicating the versatility. Especially having different kinds of development responsibilities and tasks was thought as important part making the job interesting and challenging. Working in a manager-level position was seen as positive, because having subordinates means that besides your other tasks you get to coordinate and take care of matters related to human resourcing.

There were also other aspects of versatility discussed. Another matter brought up in the comments explaining positive stance taking in the first statement was changing work environment. Work environment that changes constantly means that manager's day is never the same. There are always unexpected situations that one has to take care of. This was seen a factor affecting both making work challenging and interesting. The next argument describes how it makes the work challenging.

*What makes the work challenging is the variety of things, all sorts of things come all the time, you never know what comes next. Work is prioritized on weekly bases, you thought you can do something, but then comes something that overruns it. That's why it's positive kind of challenging.*

On the other hand, the same factor can also affect how interesting one sees his or her work. *"Even though I have tried to have some sort of routine-like things in personnel management, there is still of course a lot of situation-specific things and that makes it interesting"*. This shows that even this manager appreciates that some matters are taken care of in a routine-like manner, it cannot be bypassed that matters that are not routine-like and come unexpected are the ones that really make the difference. In addition, the ever-changing work environment can be seen as a determining factor for being interested: *"well, it will keep you interested when all the time everything is changing, that's automatic [the fact that one stays interested]"*.

Secondly, besides the first statement, work-related factors were also brought up in two other statements. On the fifth statement "My manager supports and motivates", manager's behavior on employees work was used as a positive argument on one's work. It was thought that manager can show motivation by giving more challenging tasks to the employee. This way of motivation and supporting was seen not very straightforward. One might not realize it as manager being motivational when giving challenging tasks. Therefore, employee itself must be more conscious about this because manager might not say it directly. However, some of the interviewees thought this is enough and used this behavior backing up a positive stance taking in this statement. *"I do know that when I have succeeded in my work, I know that I will be given more responsibilities in some matters, and I feel that's motivating – and also that kind of some confidentiality posts, why not, I think that's motivating."*

Finally, the last argumentation used to explain positive stance taking was interesting work tasks. On the very last statement, "Overall I'm extremely satisfied with Company

X as a place to work”, interviewees took mainly a positive stance. There were many work-related factors that they brought up during the argumentation. It was seen that their own work is very interesting: *“this is the most interesting place I have worked by far”*. Also in some of the cases where the interviewee thought there are some reservations to the stance taking, the matters related to work were the ones that he or she saw positive. This can be demonstrated with the following comment: *“But my own work tasks are the ones I enjoy”*.

### **Arguments used to explain reservations in stance taking**

Even though there were many work-related matters used to explain positive stance taking in the statements, there were also work-related matters raised when explaining reservations in the stance taking. In the first statement, “My job is challenging and interesting”, change of working life was brought up as being negative and caused reservations. This can be clearly seen from the following comment: *“these days working life has changed shortsighted and tearing – and it disrupts the concentration to those relevant, relevant [work tasks] to me”*. It was seen making the work less interesting. As well as when one has to correct other people’s mistakes, and misunderstandings was pointed out as something not interesting.

Another point mentioned that could bring the attitude down, is the amount of information that can be from time to time be overwhelming. Especially if working with topics that are often in the media this can be the case. There is so much information available and, on the other hand, everybody seems to have an opinion to those kinds of matters, makes it harder to concentrate to the essential.

Not only the comments on the first statement but also on the fourth one, “The people I work with cooperate to get the job done” included work-related reservations. The matter that raised reservations in this statement was workload. It was thought that nobody will hold back on cooperation but the situational factors might cause teamwork to suffer. This is demonstrated with the following statement: *“situations just are, that everybody has all the time something to do, so that within these premises and knowledge, yes [I agree with the statement]”*. Therefore, if one has too much to do, it is harder to find time helping others.

#### 4.4 Company's strengths and challenges

During the theme interview as well as in the argumentation of the qualitative attitude statements interviewees mentioned many matters as being strengths of this particular company. Since these are very much same topics that raised discussion in other parts of the interview as well, I have introduced them already previously in the results. Figure 12 below presents them all to summarize them. Next I will show them once more in a more structured way.

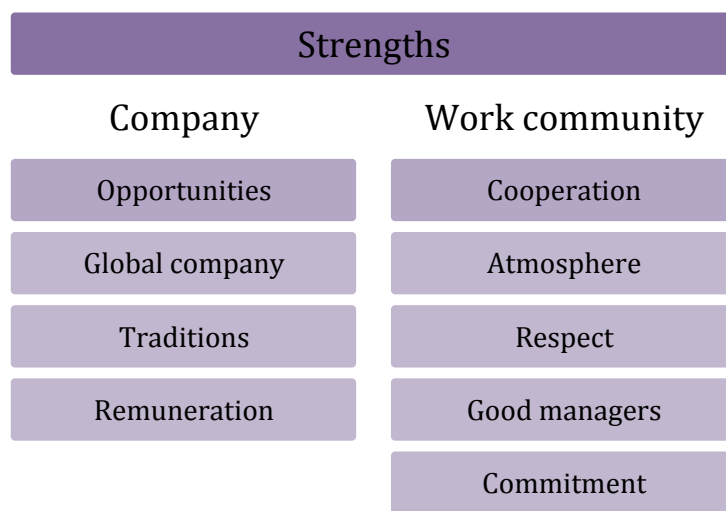


Figure 12. Company's strengths regarding organizational commitment

Company related matters are connected to the fact that company is large and global having interesting opportunities for employees. The company has long traditions, which is thought as something that the company can truly benefit. The last company related matter was the remuneration when thinking of the whole palette that the company offers besides salary. Work community is seen as having extremely good atmosphere and colleagues are truly helpful and working together to tackle the daily challenges. The work community also shows respect to one another. Overall, the managers of this company were seen very good, which reflects to many issues touching employees' organizational commitment. Lastly, it was thought that employees in this company are committed.



On the other hand, matters where the company could improve in order to increase employees' organizational commitment raised plenty of discussion with all the interviewees. There are some unique matters that have not been introduced before, and therefore I will elaborate on these more. Mainly the topics were similar to one another and can be categorized under two categories, HR related matters and organizational matters. Figure 10 below summarizes the results. The first one clearly raised more comments and thus also has more aspects in it. One reason why there were more similar matters mentioned under the first category is that even though the company has segments working fairly separately, they still share the HR practices. Due to the same reason organizational matters could be very different in these two segments. Still, both of the categories include matters from people in different segments.

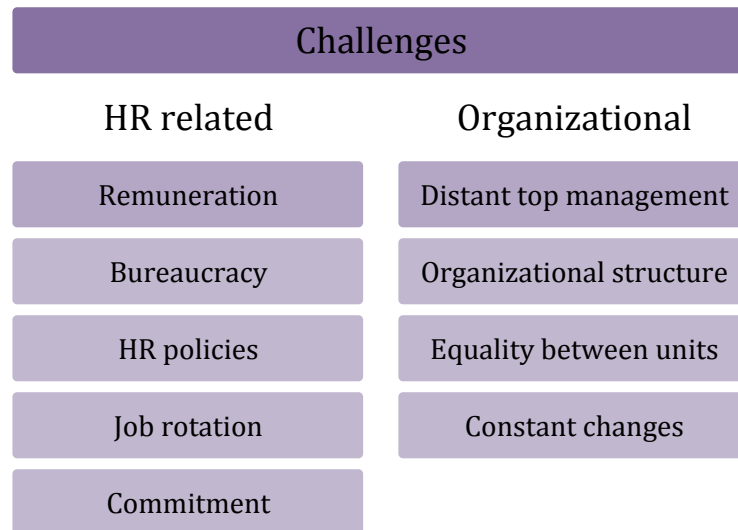


Figure 10. Company's challenges regarding organizational commitment

To start with HR related matters, there were many matters brought up, which I have further grouped into six subcategories. One that raised the most comments was the remuneration and it can also be seen that it has raised a lot of discussion since this topic has been introduced several times already in this paper. In conclusion, it was thought the company is not paying very good salary. However, most of them also wanted to emphasize that it is not too important if everything else is handled well and person enjoys his or her work. Not only the salary, but also rewarding was raised as something that should be improved.

HR practices were seen very bureaucratic causing managers spend large amount of time, for example, getting someone hired and in the systems. It was understood that a large company needs its' processes and systems to be able to stay on track what is going on, but it was hoped that it would somehow be made more flexible and easier to use for managers. *"We always speak about flexibility and such, you [the company] must have it in you as well, that it's not enough, that you react quickly to customers' needs. That would be a challenge for [name of the company]."*

The current economic situation and its' effects on HR policy were criticized. Company has had employee co-operation negotiations and fairly small amount of people have been laid off as a consequence of those. Even though it is good that not many people are dismissed, it was criticized that it is hard to see the real effect of those layoffs on saving the company. But instead, these are creating a very unstable situation among the employees.

*It has clearly decreased the level of commitment and spirit here. That insecurity comes up in the performance review discussions and in everything. It takes long time for people, before they... Even though here and now it feels that after six months everything is back to normal, but people do remember and avoid applying to those specific positions where people have been laid off.*

It was hoped that the company would more responsible what comes to hiring new people in the situations when the economy and business are doing well. Then there would not be that large pressure to cut down people when the situations change. Also, it was mentioned that in the situations when management sees that the future is not looking good, there could be more options available than only laying off people. It was seen that people planning is not exploited on a full scale, and for example, not taken into consideration how future retirements will naturally reduce the amount of employees. Also, temporary lay-offs could be used to get temporary help, because it was thought that these situations usually are shifting quite fast.

Even though some of the interviewees thought that there are very good chances for advancing on one's career and job rotation, some also thought that the company could improve on these matters. It was seen that it is not easy for an employee to find new challenges within the company or at least company is not enabling this very well. It was hoped that there would be more help and somewhat standardized processes to ease this. It was thought that this would not only benefit the employee wanting new challenges

but also the company by keeping the talents and supporting them in developing even better employees for the company in the future. Therefore, it was seen as a mutual benefit, and reason why company should pay more attention to this one.

In some parts of the organization, it was indicated that people change very often not having long careers in one position. It was thought as a clear negative issue when there is no stability and people around you keep changing all the time. It was thought unfair that new person comes directly from school and company uses a lot of resources to train and develop that person. It takes time to succeed in the position, but finally, when the person has learned the job well, he or she changes somewhere else. It was hoped that the company would interfere this and help people to get more committed to the organization. This ties together with the previous challenge. If person enjoys challenges and learning new matters, it is very natural that once he or she has accomplished that in the current job, he or she starts to look for new challenges. At this point company should be able to provide new challenges for the person. If it fails, it is very likely that the person seeks challenges somewhere else.

Matters related to organization were also raised in the discussions, but much less than HR related matters. The first matter that was brought up is that company's top management was seen very distant. It was seen to affect employees' daily work by giving a signal that their work is not very significant to top management. Having top management more visible and visiting the sites would help this matter. It would provide a feeling for the employees that their work is important as well as the field of business they are working for.

The next matter was that it was thought the current organizational structure is not supporting the business. One of the segments was seen to be much smaller than the other, which caused concern how this segment is settling down next to the bigger one. It raised concerns, how ordinary people will know that this field of business is also represented within this organization. This is well demonstrated in the following comment: *"in the future we just have to make so much more noise to be heard"*.

Lastly, constant changes within the organization were brought up as a challenge for this company. There have been relatively big organizational changes within this company lately. It was mentioned that these changes make it more difficult for employees to commit. It was seen that probably for some parts of the organization these changes are

good and make the business easier for them, but for some it was thought to make it harder. For parts that it was thought to make more difficult, committing oneself to the organization was not seen easy. This is well aligned with Ruokolainen's (2011) findings that it seems to be easier for employees to commit to smaller and simpler organizations (Ruokolainen 2011, 92).

## 4.5 Summary

Next I will summarize the finding of the matters regarding the three categories used. Figure 11 is simplified version of the findings of this study.



Figure 11. Factors affecting organizational commitment

The most important company-related factors at the moment shaping the commitment of their employees are recognition and remuneration, and on the other hand the future prospects the company is having. Overall, the future prospects of the business were seen positive, but the implications that the current economic uncertainty brings to employees' work were seen negative matter. Company's interesting business field and opportunities that large company is able to provide were seen positively affecting employees' commitment as well as the history and the culture the company is having.

Work community received also much commenting in this sample as being one big part affecting employees' commitment. The most important was seen the fact that the organization near the employees functions well cooperating and having good atmosphere. The other matters mentioned were employee's manager and his or her position on affecting employees' commitment. Partially related to manager but also to other people on the work community, the importance of the feedback and recognition employee is able to get from the work community was mentioned.

The most commenting about matters related work characteristics that affect organizational commitment received the fact that employee's work must be interesting and challenging. These kinds of tasks will help employees to develop themselves. In addition, there must be opportunities to career advancement in a way that employee can have different kinds of tasks and challenges when needed. Employees on a manager position appreciate it highly that they can have proper amount of freedom and responsibilities in their work tasks. Negative issues brought up were the change of working life being now very hectic, changing and workload can be at times overwhelming.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

In this discussion I will first start with evaluation of the methods used in this study. Then I will continue with evaluating the previously introduced findings in relation to other studies and empirical data. I will also show the implications of these findings to company's human resource as well as consider the limitations and importance of this study.

### **5.1 Evaluation of the methods**

The research questions were answered well with my current methods chosen. I was able to find reasons affecting employees' organizational commitment within this specific company and how employees explain and value these matters. In addition, I was able to map some of the strengths and challenges the company is facing regarding organizational commitment.

At first my goal was to conduct brief quantitative analysis for the available employee engagement survey data. I was hoping to analyze it so that I could compare what is the connection between tenure, age and cultural background of respondents to their organizational commitment. Like mentioned before, there were a couple of questions, which could have been used to measure commitment, but the system did not enable the analyzing in a way that I could have taken the background information into consideration. Therefore, I had to be satisfied with only taking more superficial look at the data and only use it as background information. If I had been able to analyze the survey results more deeply, it would have brought a whole new side to my study.

When evaluating the methods used in this study, the qualitative attitude approach receives more attention due to it being new to me, while theme interview and thematic content analysis are frequently used and more familiar methods.

Most of the statements were commented quite briefly. In some cases interviewees told the stand they are taking, but I had to further ask for the argumentation. If this would have been the only method used, I think I would have needed to have little bit more

argumentation to each item. However, I noticed this already when conducting the two pre-interviews before the actual one, but I decided not to change the statements or try to get deeper and more analyzing answers for each of the items. There were a couple of reasons. First, I wanted to include many different aspects, but on the other hand keep the total time used for the interview relatively short. Having deeper argumentations would have meant fewer statements. The other reason for this was the fact that this was only one part of my interview and I thought those argumentations served the purpose well. I acknowledge that not having very deep argumentations for each statement could be considered as being against one idea of this method. However, when conducting the analysis there was more than enough material.

In conclusion, even though I was not able to fully follow my plans, the methods chosen served me well in a way that it was possible to gather the data I wanted. For further research, I would investigate the method of qualitative attitude approach even more to get deeper understanding of it.

## **5.2 Cohen's model of organizational commitment's development**

Out of the three models I introduced at the beginning of this paper, I will now evaluate the findings in relation to Cohen's four component model of commitment (2007) and more specifically in relation to the part of model which concentrates on organizational commitment's development. Since it was not my goal to evaluate interviewees' own commitment and categorize it under certain type of commitment, it is very logical to use this model as comparison. The two other models introduced earlier in this paper concentrate more on separate sides of commitment. When evaluating the results of this study in relation to Cohen's model there can be seen many similarities. However, in this study I was only able to focus on the commitment after entering the organization. When planning the interview, I was hoping that I could get some information about their expectations before entering the organization when asking about those. It turned out that it was very hard for interviewees to evaluate the expectations afterwards. All of them indicated that the expectations have been met without being able to very clearly point out any specific ones they have had. Due to this lack of any concrete information on their expectations, I have not addressed the issue in the results.

What can be said with this limited information is that since all of the interviewees indicated that there is not anything that they think is not met, they are in good position to become committed. Like proposed in the model, the expectations reflect the propensity of becoming committed to the organization. In other words, how likely it is that employee becomes committed. (Cohen 2007, 337.) Taken this into consideration, it actually is not the focus of my study. That would be important when recruiting new employees and making them committed, but my goal was to find factors affecting this case organization's current employees' commitment. Therefore, I will concentrate in more detail the latter part of this model in the light of my results.

When looking at the factors affecting employees' organizational commitment after entering the organization, there are higher order factors, organizational socialization and lower order factors. The model has been introduced on Figure 2 on page 12 in this paper. The Figure 12 uses Cohen's model as basis and groups some of the factors affecting commitment found in this study under his categorization.

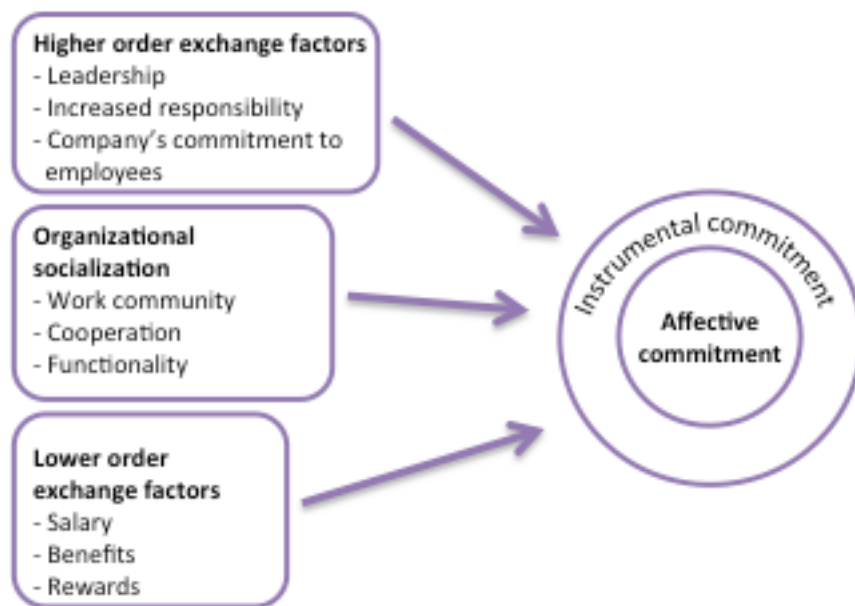


Figure 12. Modified Cohen's model of factors affecting organizational commitment

In my study there was much discussion about the lower order factors, which mainly concentrated matters related to remuneration. Therefore, it can be said that this group of factors is seen important factor affecting commitment in this sample. The reason why this raised much conversation can be the fact that this is most probably one of the



easiest topics to think of if one thinks that it is not on the level it should be. Some of the matters related to organizational commitment might be more difficult to reach and would need deeper thinking.

Second group is formed by factors affecting organizational socialization. This means often the new-hire onboarding, because that is the time when the person learns the way of working in the particular organization. This part is not relevant in my current study when the focus is on current employees. However, how well one manages in the work community can be thought as one part of socialization. Therefore, in this current study there were many matters brought up about the work community and specifically how well it functions. Thus, it can be said that in this current sample, the meaning of work community was emphasized what comes to organizational socialization. When asked to think about one's organizational commitment, it's very natural to also reflect the organization working around the employee. Since you cannot be isolated when you do your work, it's very natural that the people you work with affect your commitment to the organization.

Finally, the last group affecting organizational commitment is higher order exchange factors, which include transformational leadership, perceptions of justice and organizational support. Organizational support can be seen as giving non-instrumental rewards, which will lead to feeling of increased responsibility. (Cohen 2007, 348–349.) This matter was also visible in this sample, and interviewees mentioned one way of giving recognition to be managers who are giving them more challenging tasks when they see that employee is coping well. This was connected to increased amount of perceived organizational commitment. Another way of showing organizational support is to indicate that company is committed to the employees (Cohen 2007, 349). Similarly this was present in this sample. Interviewees indicated that the way in which the organization installs new technologies to support their daily work is one way of showing that they are committed. Leadership of employee's own manager was also seen in this sample to affect their commitment. Manager was very often mentioned as a specific matter, which has shaped employee's commitment either to good or bad. In addition, the leadership culture in the company was brought up during the interviews.

Even though the findings can be evaluated in relation to this model in some extent, there are many factors affecting organizational commitment found in this sample that are not

easily matched with this framework. The division used in the results categorizing factors affecting organizational commitment into company-, work community- and work characteristic –related matters, describes better factors brought up in this sample.

### **5.3 Importance and limitations**

The importance of the findings is merely limited to the organization in question. This study has shed light to the factors affecting employees' organizational commitment within this company. It is important for this company to have some information what the factors specifically in their organization are seen as the most important ones. This way the HR department can keep them in mind when shaping the future policies. However, since this case study is based on fairly small sample, it must be remembered that the results are not to be generalized even to apply all the employees within the company. Like already mentioned before, the concept of organizational commitment is relatively complex and every person might have unique matters affecting it. To make final decisions about future implications there must be further research made.

Since the economic situation is continuing to be challenging it is important for companies to be able to retain the talent they have. Therefore, the timing of this study is valuable for the organization studied. In addition, it is always good that the company and its' HR department shows interest towards their employees. Listening to their opinions and making their voices heard is one of the benefits of this study.

While analyzing the data I realized I had not paid attention to HR practices in employees' organizational commitment. It would have been very interesting to study how employees perceive the company's HR practices and what is the relation to organizational commitment. This is something that I would like to further study within the context. Also, it would be valuable information to the HR department. Another interesting direction would be to increase the sample drastically enabling information not only from managers but also from other employees. Most probably there would be partially very different matters brought up. Another dimension would be to include employees working in different countries. Since culture has been shown to affect

employees' commitment, it would be interesting to study if there still would be some common factors within employees working for the same company.

## **5.4 Implications to company's HR**

Since having committed employees is very beneficial to say at least and these days sometimes even crucial for the organizations, the question whether commitment can be managed by company's human resource (HR) practices is important. Is it something that company can truly affect? The effect of company's HR practices on commitment has received relatively little attention by far (Conway & Monks 2009, 141–142). However, there have been some researches conducted on this one. I will next introduce some of the results from these previous studies and at the same time reflect results of this study to those.

Conway and Monks (2009) conducted a research exploring the linkages between employee attitudes to HR practices and organizational commitment. Allen and Meyer's three-component model of commitment was used to measure organizational commitment. The measures they used for HR practices were employee involvement, resourcing and integration, training, career development, performance management, job security, employability, rewards and job design. Most of these are relatively self-explanatory, but job design includes work-related matters. To be more specific those can be, for example, that person has sufficiently varied and interesting work, freedom to decide how and when to work and possibility to make full use of one's skills and abilities. The results show that employees' attitudes toward each of these HR practices are positively related to affective commitment and negatively related to intention to leave. They did not have very big impact on either continuance or normative commitment. (Conway & Monks 2009, 145–147, 157–158.)

When studying the effect of HR practices on organizational commitment, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Purcell, Rayton and Swart (2005) divided employees studied into three groups – workers, first-line managers and professionals. What they found is that there are three common factors shaping all of their commitment. Those are rewards and recognition, communication and work-life balance. When specifically looking at the

managers, they found that in addition to those their commitment was linked to perceived career opportunities and involvement to decision making. (Kinnie et al. 2005, 19–22.) Iverson and Buttigieg (1999, 324) also found organizational commitment to be affected by promotional opportunities and the fact how well employees' ideas are received, which is the same what Kinnie et al. (2005) refer to when talking about communication. These results from previous studies are well aligned with my current study.

In this sample rewards and recognition was raised multiple times during the discussion as being matter affecting their commitment. In addition, it was seen important that their manager listens and takes their ideas forward. Only matter that was not that visible in this sample was work-life balance. However, interviewees did bring up the individual expectations toward the work at different times of one's life, which reflect the same issue. Therefore, HR policies should be placed in order to better these. They truly are something that company should pay attention to in relation to affect their employees' organizational commitment.

Even though there are many factors affecting organizational commitment that the company cannot control, like personal and environmental factors, they can implement strategies to minimize the effects of these. Human resource policies can provide more flexibility to employees' work and thus enable them to better combine personal life with work. On the other hand, one environmental factor affecting the commitment is the availability of other job opportunities. Directly company cannot affect that, but for example by making sure that its' remuneration is competitive and employees have opportunities for career advancement, it can affect how attractive those other opportunities are. (Iverson & Buttigieg 1999, 327.)

When evaluating the HR practices in order to find the most important ones affecting employees' organizational commitment, there seems to be some disagreement. Conway and Monks (2005) conclude that "there does not appear to be a 'one best way' approach to the development of high commitment and a variety of routes to commitment and retention appear possible" (2005, 154). Their study included three different organizations and the findings show that it is very hard to find common factors across the organizations. Therefore, commitment is very complex issue and there might not be one solution that would work in all organizations. (Conway & Monks 2005, 154–155.)

Having this in mind it is very rational to have conducted this study as a case study, when aim is only to find some explanatory factors within this organization.

Even though the empirical evidence from previous studies conclude that employees' organizational commitment is hard to control, from the findings of this study it can be said that there are some matters that the HR department of this company could bear in mind. Many of the interviewees brought up on one hand how good it is that this particular company is large and global having many opportunities and on the other hand strongly indicated how important it is that employee gets new, challenging positions during one's career enabling the professional development. Therefore, HR could try to set up processes to support job rotation locally and globally.

Also remuneration and rewarding was seen extremely important within this sample, but often the fact is that when seeking to be cost-efficient the company cannot raise the salaries and give large amount of bonuses. However, other means of rewarding could also be thought by HR. This kind of job rotation, where employee gets more challenging post, could serve as one way of rewarding. People often feel very rewarding to be able to learn something new, to show one's competences and further develop one professionally. The fact that company shows interest in employee's career by enabling these changes indicates that the company cares about its' employees' development.

In conclusion, today's modern world provides variety of challenges for employees to be committed to their organization. Some of these challenges are caused by changes on how employees now see their careers and what are the expectations they set for their careers. On the other hand, some the challenges are caused by the company itself when trying to find the most cost efficient way of doing business in these turbulent economic situations. However, like already noted, the importance of having committed employees in the organization has not diminished along the changes. Therefore, there must be found new creative ways for companies to support, motivate and thus commit their talented workforce.

## **5.5 Implications to adult education**

Even this topic as a whole might not be considered purely educational, there are still aspects directly linking this to adult education. In general, adult education has many linkages to human resource practices. In various processes HR conducts it would be beneficial to have educational view. In HR matters related to development are more adult educational than anything. Also, adult educational view can bring humane perspective to often very business oriented way of working in the companies. After all, they are people who work for the companies and in the end make the difference whether the company succeeds or fails.

One important part of adult education is life-long learning. In today's world people must be able to learn all the time, it is not enough that you learn one profession and keep doing it the same way for the rest of your life. Even though you would not want to change your profession, the world around us is constantly changing forcing us to change the way we work to keep up with it. Employees in the business organizations must keep learning and adapting to new ways of working to be able to contribute to business success. Adult education and life-long learning come very close to this concept.

Like found in this study one very important factor affecting person's organizational commitment is professional development during one's career. Employees need to have the possibility to see the future potential development in the company to commit themselves to it. Also, there need to be concrete examples how the company has provided these possibilities in the past for employees to see it happening to really believe in it. Learning by doing and learning with others are most impactful ways of developing oneself. (McCauley, DeRue, Yost, & Taylor 2014, xxv.) There are multiple ways how this type of learning can happen, and all parties – employee, manager and human resource department - have their role in making it happen. It can happen, for example, by expanding employee's current role by giving new challenges in a form of a project management or exposure to other roles or departments inside the company. Thus, there can be both small matters as well as larger changes in employee's role that enable him or her to further develop oneself. This aspect of learning and developing oneself during the career is something adult education has much to give. It is important to provide educational perspective in the business world.

This study shed light to different matters affecting organizational commitment. Since it is quite complex concept having very different matters from one another affecting it, to improve it would also need cooperation from different parties. Commitment is thought very much concept related to human resources and definitely there are many parts that human resource department can try to find solutions to improve it. Those are for example matters related to compensation and benefits, career advancement, leadership development and individual professional development. From the adult education perspective it would be very interesting to further develop concepts to help employees in their professional development in this case organization.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The matters introduced in the introduction of this paper shaping commitment these days were partially found in this study as well. It was clear that employees' own development and career advancement is very important for them. If the company is able to provide challenges and opportunities for its' employees there is a big possibility that they will stay at this organization. However, if the company fails on this, there are is a big chance that the employee starts to look for these from other companies. In that sense it can be thought that employees are more and more committed to their own development than the company itself. Companies can, however, make their employees committed to themselves if they take care of the matters important for the employees.

The current hardship on economy was also very much visible in this sample affecting employees' organizational commitment. It was brought up several times that it is hard to build the trust on the employer and the organization if he future is constantly very unsure. It definitely brings down the commitment. On the other hand, it was said to strengthen the commitment to been able to survive through all the tough times the company has had. Employees saw themselves important for the company, since they have been able to keep their jobs. Even though it can be thought that there is not too much human resource departments can affect this and therefore their employees' organizational commitment, there is still something that can be done. These situations are always uncomfortable, but how the company and its' human resource department

takes care of them is crucial and totally something that they have an impact. Therefore, this should be paid attention to.

In conclusion, even though organizational commitment is a complex matter itself and today's world is definitely not making it any easier for the companies to make their employees committed to them, there truly are matters the company can affect. The good side of it being very complex is that there are many matters that can be paid attention to in order to start improving it.



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## APPENDIX 1: HAASTATTELURUNKO

### TAUSTATIEDOT

- Työvuosien määrä [yrityksen nimi]
- Titteli
- Alaisten määrä
- Työvuosien määrä esimiestyössä
- Ikä

### ASENNEVÄITTÄMÄT

Työni on haastavaa ja mielenkiintoista.

Tunnen, että minulla on lupaava tulevaisuus [yrityksen nimi].

[Yrityksen nimi] antaa tunnustusta erityisen merkittävästä työpanoksesta.

Työtoverini tekevät yhteistyötä, jotta saisimme työt tehtyä.

Esimieheni kannustaa ja motivoi.

Olen ylpeä siitä, että työskentelen [yrityksen nimi].

Olen yleisesti ottaen erittäin tyytyväinen [yrityksen nimi] työpaikkana.

### OMA KOKEMUS SITOUTUMISESTA

- Mitä organisaatioon sitoutuminen tarkoittaa sinulle?
- Kuinka sitoutunut koet olevasi nykyiseen organisaatioon?
- Millä tekijöillä on vaikutusta sinun sitoutumiseen tähän yritykseen?
- Mitä työskenteleminen [yrityksen nimi] merkitsee sinulle?

### SITOUTUMINEN SUHTEESSA AIKAAN

- Jos mietit aikaa, jolloin tulit töihin ja siitä eteenpäin nykyhetkeen, tunnistatko tilanteita/käännepkohtia, jolloin sitoutumisessa on tapahtunut muutoksia?
  - o Mihin suuntaan?
  - o Mistä johtuu/mitkä tekijät vaikuttaneet siihen?
  - o Ovatko odotuksesi työstä täyttyneet?

### YRITYKSEN PLUSSAT JA MIINUKSET SITOUTUMISEEN LIITTYEN

- Missä asioissa [yrityksen nimi] on onnistunut ja siten auttanut sinua olemaan sitoutuneempi?
- Mitkä ovat [yrityksen nimi] vahvuuksia verrattuina muihin yrityksiin?
- Missä asioissa [yrityksen nimi] voisi parantaa ja tuloksena olisit sitoutuneempi?